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Volume XIII

Indochina

(in two parts)
Part 1

DEPARTMENT OF STATE • UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Editor in Chief
John P. Glennon

Editor
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PREFACE

The publication *Foreign Relations of the United States* constitutes the official record of the foreign policy of the United States. The volumes in the series include, subject to necessary security considerations, all documents needed to give a comprehensive record of the major foreign policy decisions of the United States together with appropriate materials concerning the facts which contributed to the formulation of policies. Documents in the files of the Department of State are supplemented by papers from other Government agencies involved in the formulation of foreign policy.

The basic documentary diplomatic record printed in the volumes of the series *Foreign Relations of the United States* is edited by the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State. The editing is guided by the principles of historical objectivity and in accordance with the following official guidance first promulgated by Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg on March 26, 1925.

There may be no alteration of the text, no deletions without indicating where in the text the deletion is made, and no omission of facts which were of major importance in reaching a decision. Nothing may be omitted for the purpose of concealing or glossing over what might be regarded by some as a defect of policy. However, certain omissions of documents are permissible for the following reasons:

a. To avoid publication of matters which would tend to impede current diplomatic negotiations or other business.
b. To condense the record and avoid repetition of needless details.
c. To preserve the confidence reposed in the Department by individuals and by foreign governments.
d. To avoid giving needless offense to other nationalities or individuals.
e. To eliminate personal opinions presented in despatches and not acted upon by the Department. To this consideration there is one qualification—in connection with major decisions it is desirable, where possible, to show the alternative presented to the Department before the decision was made.

Documents selected for publication in the *Foreign Relations* volumes are referred to the Department of State Classification/Declassification Center for declassification clearance. The Center reviews the documents, makes declassification decisions, and obtains the clearance of geographic and functional bureaus of the Department of State, as well as of other appropriate agencies of the government. The Center, in coordination with the geographic bureaus of the Department of State, conducts communications with foreign governments regarding documents or information of those governments proposed for inclusion in *Foreign Relations* volumes.

Neal H. Petersen compiled this volume under the supervision of John P. Glennon.

Until his retirement in 1979, Deputy Historian Fredrick Aandahl directed the entire *Foreign Relations* project, including the preparation of this volume.

Rita M. Baker of the Publishing Services Division (Paul M. Washington, Chief), performed the technical editing under the supervision of Margie R. Wilber, and collaborated with Vicki L. Ettleman to compile the index.

WILLIAM Z. SLANY
Acting Historian and General Editor
Office of the Historian
Bureau of Public Affairs

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INTRODUCTION

This volume constitutes a continuation of the coverage of United States policy with respect to Indochina which was previously provided in annual East Asian volumes of the *Foreign Relations* series. For the 1951 compilation on Indochina, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, volume VI, pages 332 ff. The documentation printed here is presented in chronological order. Within each given day, papers are arranged according to Washington time of occurrence or receipt to the extent that it was possible to determine it.

The material in this volume should be considered in connection with the compilation on the policy of the United States with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in general, in volume XII. That collection includes numerous papers which deal with Indochina in the context of overall policy toward Asia and Southeast Asia. Documentation on the question of Indochina also appears in the national security policy compilation in volume II, in various compilations on international conferences in volume V, and in the material on relations of the United States with France in volume VI.

Documentation on the Geneva Conference of April–July 1954 is presented in volume XVI. Generally speaking, papers concerning events in Indochina and the development of basic American policy regarding the area during the period of the conference are included here, while the negotiations themselves and policy decisions intimately related to them are detailed in volume XVI. Cross references to papers in the Geneva Conference volume and other collections have been supplied here in order to provide an unbroken account of events and a comprehensive guide to all material on Indochina in the *Foreign Relations* series.

This volume should also be considered in light of the material already published in United States Department of Defense, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, 12 volumes (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1971), particularly Books 1, 2, 8, 9, and 10. Appropriate cross references to documents in the "Pentagon Papers" have been supplied as necessary throughout the volume. Other published materials found most useful in the preparation of this volume are mentioned in Part B of the list of sources.

LIST OF SOURCES

PART A. UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Department of State

Decimal files of the Department of State.

Conference Files, Lot 59 D 95

Collection of documentation on certain official visits of European heads of government and foreign ministers to the United States and on major international conferences attended by the Secretary of State for the period 1949–1955, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

Conference Files, Lot 60 D 627

Collection of documentation on certain official visits of heads of government and foreign ministers to the United States and on major international conferences attended by the Secretary of State for the period 1953–1958, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat. This file is a continuation of Lot 59 D 95.

FE Files, Lot 55 D 388

Files maintained by the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs for the year 1953.

FE Files, Lot 55 D 480

Files maintained by the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs for the year 1954.

INR Files, Lot 58 D 528

Miscellaneous Top Secret files for the years 1949–1954 as retired by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, including master file of Intelligence Estimates (IE's) prepared by the Department of State Estimates Group.

INR–NIE Files

Files retained by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research containing copies of National Intelligence Estimates and Special National Intelligence Estimates, including NIE's and SNIE's for the 1952–1954 period.

OCB Files, Lot 62 D 430

Master files of the Operations Coordinating Board for the years 1953–1960, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

ON Files, Lot 60 D 641

Collection of memoranda of the Press Conferences of the Secretary of State (1935–1955), Department of State Radio (Wireless) Bulletins (1935–1945), News Digests (1945–1952), and other unclassified press materials for the years 1909–1954, as maintained by the Office of News, Bureau of Public Affairs.

PPS Files, Lot 64 D 563

Master file of documents, drafts, records of meetings, memoranda, and related correspondence for the years 1947–1953 of the Policy Planning Staff.

PPS Files, Lot 65 D 101

Master file of documents, drafts, records of meetings, memoranda, and related correspondence for the year 1954 of the Policy Planning Staff.

Presidential Correspondence, Lot 66 D 204

Exchanges of correspondence between the President and the heads of foreign governments for the years 1953–1964, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

PSA Files, Lot 54 D 190

Consolidated files of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs for the years 1937–1952.

PSA Files, Lot 58 D 207

Certain files of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs for the years 1949–1955, containing primarily material on Indochina.

Secretary's Letters, Lot 56 D 459

Correspondence of the Secretary of State for the years 1945–1956, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

Secretary's Memoranda, Lot 53 D 444

Chronological collections of the Secretary of State's memoranda, memoranda of conversation, and memoranda of conversation with the President for the years 1947–1953, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, Lot 64 D 199

Chronological collections of the Secretary of State's memoranda of conversation and the Under Secretary of State's memoranda of conversation for the years 1953–1960, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, Lot 65 D 238

Chronological collections of the Secretary of State's memoranda of conversation with the President for the years 1949–1952, memoranda of the Secretary of State and Under Secretary of State for the years 1951–1952, and the Secretary of State's memoranda of conversation with Senator Tom Connally of Texas for the years 1950–1951, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

Secretary's Staff Meetings, Lot 63 D 75

Chronological collections of the minutes of the Secretary of State's staff meetings during the years 1952–1960, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

S/P–NSC Files, Lot 62 D 1

Serial and subject master file of National Security Council documents and correspondence for the years 1948–1961, as maintained by the Policy Planning Staff.

S/S–NSC Files, Lot 63 D 351

Serial master file of National Security Council documents and correspondence and related Department of State memoranda for the years 1947–1961, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

S/S–NSC (Miscellaneous) Files, Lot 66 D 95

Administrative and miscellaneous National Security Council documentation, including NSC Records of Action, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat for the years 1947–1963.

S/S–NSC Files, Lot 66 D 148

Miscellaneous files concerning subjects considered by the National Security Council during the period 1949–1962, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

State–JCS Meetings, Lot 61 D 417

Top secret records of meetings between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and representatives of the Department of State for the period 1951–1959 and selected problem files on the Middle East for the period 1954–1956, as maintained by the Executive Secretariat.

Vietnam Desk Files, Lot 58 D 257

Subject files of the Officer in Charge of Vietnamese Affairs, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, for the years 1954–1955.

United States Mission at the United Nations, New York

USUN Files

Files of the United States Mission at the United Nations.

Agency for International Development (files of predecessor agencies, the Mutual Security Administration and the Foreign Operations Administration)

MSA–FOA Message Files, FRC 55 A 374

Telegrams, airgrams, despatches, and reports to and from all overseas missions from January 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954 as maintained by MSA–FOA headquarters.

MSA–FOA Director's Files, FRC 56 A 632

General subject and country file from the Office of the MSA–FOA Director covering all aspects of the foreign aid program for the years 1952–1955.

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas

Dulles Papers

Records of John Foster Dulles, 1952–1959.

Whitman File

Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President of the United States, 1953–1961, maintained by his personal Secretary, Ann C. Whitman. The Whitman File includes the following elements: the Name Series, the Dulles–Herter Series, Eisenhower Diaries, Ann Whitman (ACW) Diaries, National Security Council Records, Miscellaneous Records, Cabinet Papers, Legislative

Meetings, International Meetings, the Administration Series, and the International File.

Eisenhower Records

Includes the daily appointment books of President Eisenhower for the years 1953–1961.

James C. Hagerty Papers

Papers of James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to President Eisenhower, for the years 1953–1961.

White House Office Files

Several White House office collections, including files of the Office of the Staff Secretary, and Project "Clean Up."

National Archives, Washington, D.C.

JCS Records

National Archives Record Group 218, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Naval Historical Division, Washington, D.C.

Radford Papers

The personal papers of Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific (1949–1953) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1953–1957), presently located in the Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Division, Department of the Navy, Washington, D.C.

Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey

Dulles Papers, Daily Appointments

Daily log of the meetings and appointments of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles for the years 1953–1959.

Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri

Truman Papers, President's Secretary's File (PSF)

Papers of Harry S. Truman as President, 1945–1953, maintained by his personal secretary.

United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

Ridgway Papers

Papers of General Matthew B. Ridgway, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, August 15, 1953–June 30, 1955.

PART B. PUBLISHED SOURCES

The following publications, including secondary accounts, were particularly useful in the preparation of this volume. Citations to additional published documents, memoirs, and other primary sources are provided throughout the volume as appropriate. No responsibility is taken by the Department of State for the accuracy of events set forth in unofficial sources.

Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1969).

Sherman Adams, *First-Hand Report* (New York, Harper & Row, 1961).

L'Année Politique, 1952, 1953, and 1954 (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1953–1955).

Victor Bator, *Vietnam: A Diplomatic Tragedy* (Dobbs Ferry, New York, Oceana Publications, 1965).

Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, volume II, *Vietnam at War* (New York, Praeger, 1967).

Allan W. Cameron, ed., *Viet-Nam Crisis: A Documentary History*, volume I, 1940–1956 (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1971).

Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War: Indochina, 1954* (New York, Praeger, 1969).

Arthur J. Dommen, *Conflict in Laos: The Politics of Neutralization* (New York, Praeger, 1971).

Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story* (New York, Harper, 1956).

Anthony Eden, *Memoirs of Anthony Eden: Full Circle* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1960).

Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953–1956* (Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Company, 1963).

Paul Ely, *Memoires: L'Indochine dans la tourmente* (Paris, Librairie Plon, 1964).

Denise Folliot, ed., *Documents on International Affairs*, 1952, 1953, and 1954. Royal Institute of International Affairs (London, Oxford University Press, 1955–1957).

France, Assemblée Nationale, *Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débates Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale*, 1952–1954.

Melvin Gurtov, *The First Vietnam Crisis* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1967).

Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940–1955* (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1955).

Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*. 4 vols. (Hanoi, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960–1962).

Edwin Bickford Hooper, Dean C. Allard, and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict*, volume I, *The Setting of the Stage to 1959*. Navy History Division, Department of the Navy (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1976).

Joseph Laniel, *Le drame Indochinois: De Dien-Bien-Phu au pari de Genève* (Paris, Librairie Plon, 1957).

Edward G. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972).

Henri Navarre, *Agonie de l'Indochine* (Paris, Librairie Plon, 1956).

Nixon, Richard, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, Grosset and Dunlap, 1978).

The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decision-making on Vietnam [The Senator Gravel Edition]. 4 vols. (Boston, Beacon Press, 1971). *See also* United States Department of Defense, *United States–Vietnam Relations*.

Arthur W. Radford, *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford*, edited by Stephen Jurika, Jr. (Stanford, California, Hoover Institution Press, 1980).

Roger M. Smith, *Cambodia's Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1965).

United States Congress, *Congressional Record*, 1952–1954.

United States Congress, Senate, *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 83d Congress, 2d session, 1954 Historical Series, volume VI (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1977).

United States Department of Defense, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967* ["The Pentagon Papers"]. 12 vols. (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1971).

United States Department of State, *American Foreign Policy, 1950–1955: Basic Documents* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1957).

United States Department of State, *Bulletin*, 1952–1954.

United States President, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1952–1953* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1966).

United States President, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1960).

United States President, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1960).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This list does not include standard abbreviations in common usage; unusual abbreviations of rare occurrence which are clarified at appropriate points; and those abbreviations and contractions which, although uncommon, are understandable from the context.

AA, anti-aircraft
ABN, airborne
AC, aircraft
AEC, Atomic Energy Commission
AF, Air Force
AFFE, Armed Forces Far East
AFOIN, Air Force Office of Intelligence
AFP, Agence France Presse
ALUSNA, United States Naval Attaché
ANZUS, Australia, New Zealand, United States
AP, Associated Press
AR, Annual Review (NATO)
ARK, Royal Cambodian Army
ARMA, Army Attaché
ARS, *Action Républicaine et Sociale*, French political party
AS, Associated States
ASF, Associated States Forces
ASIC, Associated States of Indochina
BN, battalion
BNA, Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, Department of State
C, Office of the Counselor of the Department of State
CAS, controlled American source
CAT, Civil Air Transport
CBS, Columbia Broadcasting System
CCAF, Chinese Communist Air Force
CCF, Chinese Communist Forces
CF, Conference File
CFM, Council of Foreign Ministers
CG, Commanding General
CGUSAF, Commanding General, United States Air Force
Chi, Chinese
ChiCom, Chinese Communist
Chi Commie(s), Chinese Communist(s)
CIA, Central Intelligence Agency
C-in-C, CINC, Commander in Chief
CINCUSAFE, Commander in Chief, United States Air Force Europe
CINCFE, Commander in Chief, Far East
CINCPAC, Commander in Chief, Pacific
CINCUNC, Commander in Chief, United Nations Command
circ, circular
cirtel, circular telegram
CNO, Chief of Naval Operations
CO, company
COCOM, Coordinating Committee on export controls, located in Paris
Codel, telegram series indicator for Congressional and Vice Presidential delegation travel
com, communications
Commie(s), Communist(s)
COMREP, Commissioner-Representative
ConGen, Consul General
Contel, Consulate telegram
Cotel, country team telegram
CP, Command Post; Communist Party
CPF, French Communist Party
CSA (CSUSA), Chief of Staff, United States Army
CY, calendar year
DA, Department of the Army
DBP, Dien Bien Phu
DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission
DefMin, Defense Minister
Depcirtel, Department of State circular telegram
DEPTAR, Department of the Army
Deptel, Department telegram
Div, division

DMS, Director of the Mutual Security Agency
DRV, Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Dulte, primarily a series indicator for telegrams from Secretary of State Dulles while absent from Washington; also used as series indicator for telegrams to him from the head of the United States Delegation at an international conference.
E, Bureau of Economic Affairs, Department of State
ECA, Economic Cooperation Administration
EDC, European Defense Community
ELaC, United States designation for documentation related to discussions with General Paul Ely, French High Commissioner and Commander in Chief in Indochina, and Guy La Chambre, Minister in Charge of Relations with the Associated States, at Washington, September 1954
Emb, Embassy
Embdesp, Embassy despatch
Embtel, Embassy telegram
EUR, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State
EUR/P, Public Affairs Adviser, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State
FAF, French Air Force
FBI, Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBIS, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FE, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State
FEACOM, Far East Command
FEAF, Far East Air Forces
FEC, French Expeditionary Corps
FECOM, Far East Command
FHA, Federal Housing Administration
FOA, Foreign Operations Administration
FOA/W, headquarters of the Foreign Operations Administration in Washington
FonAff, Foreign Affairs
FonMin, Foreign Minister
FonOff, Foreign Office
FPT, French political talks; United States designation for documentation related to discussions with René Mayer, Premier of France, at Washington, in March 1953
FRC, Federal Records Center
FSO, Foreign Service Officer
FTEO, French forces in the Far East
FVA, Free Vietnam Army
FY, fiscal year
FYI, for your information
G, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of State
G–2, Army general staff section dealing with intelligence at the divisional or higher level
G–3, Army general staff section dealing with operations and training at the divisional or higher level
GA, General Assembly of the United Nations
Gamos, pacification units employed by the State of Vietnam
GCA, ground-controlled approach
Gento, series indicator for telegrams from Defense representatives at the Geneva Conference to the Department of Defense
GHQ, General Headquarters
GM, *groupe mobile*, French regimental combat team
GMC, General Motors Corporation
GNP, Gross National Product
GOI, Government of India
GOP, Government of Pakistan
HC, High Commissioner
HCM, Ho Chi Minh
HICOM, High Commissioner
HM, His Majesty
HMG, Her (His) Majesty's Government (of the United Kingdom)
IAC, Intelligence Advisory Committee
IBRD, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IC, Indochina
ICC, International Control Commission
IE, Intelligence Estimate (Department of State)
IMF, International Monetary Fund

INR, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
IO, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Department of State
IS, International Staff (NATO)
ISA, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs
JCS, Joint Chiefs of Staff
KMAG (KMAAG), United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea
L, Office of the Legal Adviser, Department of State
LAT, United States designation for documentation related to discussions with Jean Letourneau, French Minister in Charge of Relations with the Associated States and High Commissioner in Indochina, at Washington, in March 1953
Legtel, Legation telegram
LFT, United States designation for documentation related to discussions with Jean Letourneau, French Minister in Charge of Relations with the Associated States and High Commissioner in Indochina, at Washington, in June 1952
LOC, line of communication
LST, landing ship, tank
MAAC, Mutual Assistance Advisory Committee
MAAG, Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAG, Military Advisory Group
maint, maintenance
MATS, Military Air Transport Service
MDA, Mutual Defense Assistance
MDAP, Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MEA, Ministry of External Affairs
med, medical
MilAtt, Military Attaché
MIN, minute
MN, Monetary Affairs Staff, Department of State
MRP, *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, French political party
MSA, Mutual Security Act (of 1951); Mutual Security Agency; Mutual Security Assistance
MSA/W, Mutual Security Agency, Washington
msg, message
MSP, Mutual Security Program
Musto, series indicator for telegrams from the Mutual Security Agency in Washington to its missions abroad
mytel, my telegram
NA, Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, Department of State
NAC, National Advisory Council on International Monetary and Financial Problems; North Atlantic Council
NAT, North Atlantic Treaty
NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO, noncommissioned officer
niact, night action, communications indicator requiring attention by the recipient at any hour of the day or night
NIE, National Intelligence Estimate
noforn, no foreign dissemination
NSC, National Security Council
NZ, New Zealand
O, Office of the Under Secretary of State for Administration
OARMA, Series indicator for telegrams from the Office of the Army Attaché
OCB, Operations Coordinating Board
ODM, Office of Defense Mobilization
OIR/DRF, Division of Research for the Far East, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State
OMA, Office of Military Assistance, Department of Defense
ON, Office of News, Department of State
ONI, Office of Naval Intelligence
OSD, Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSP, offshore procurement
P, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State
PAO, Public Affairs Officer
PM, Prime Minister
POC, Peace Observation Commission
POL, petroleum, oil, lubricants
PriMin, Prime Minister

PPS, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State
PSA, Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State
PSB, Psychological Strategy Board
PW, prisoner of war
R, Office of the Special Assistant for Intelligence, Department of State
RA, Office of European Regional Affairs, Department of State
RAF, Royal Air Force
RC, Route Coloniale
rcn, reconnaissance
RCT, regimental combat team
reftel, reference telegram
regt, regiment
ResMin, Resident Minister
ROK, Republic of Korea
RGR, *Rassemblement de Gauche Républicain* (Assembly of the Republican Left), French political party
RPF, *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (Assembly of the French People), French political party
RTC, Replacement Training Center
SAC, Supreme Allied Commander
SC, Security Council of the United Nations
SCAP, Supreme Commander Allied Powers
SCEM, signing ceremonies in Europe; United States designation for documentation related to bipartite and tripartite meetings of the Foreign Ministers of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States at Paris in May 1952
SDECE, *Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage*, the French foreign intelligence service
SE, Special Estimate
SEA, Southeast Asia
SEAP, letters standing for "Southeast Asia Pact" were used as a series indicator for documents circulated in preparation for the Manila Conference
SEATO, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
Secto, series indicator for telegrams to the Department of State from the Secretary of State (or his delegation) in connection with international conferences
SFIO, *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*, the French Socialist Party
SHAPE, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SIG, signal
Sitrep, situation report
S/MSA, Office of the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs
SNIE, Special National Intelligence Estimate
SOA, Office of South Asian Affairs, Department of State
S/P, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State
S/S, the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State
S/S–RO, Reports and Operations Staff, Executive Secretariat, Department of State
S/S–S, Committee Secretariat Staff, Executive Secretariat, Department of State
STEM, United States Special Technical and Economic Mission
STF, United States designation for documentation related to bilateral talks with French officials during the Washington Foreign Ministers meeting of July 1953
SYG, Secretary-General
TAC, Tactical Air Command
TC, Division of Language Services, Department of State
TCA, Technical Cooperation Administration, Department of State
Tedul, primarily a series indicator for telegrams to Secretary of State Dulles while absent from Washington; also used as series indicator for telegrams from Dulles to the head of the United States Delegation at an international conference
Telac, series indicator for telegrams to Secretary of State Acheson during absences from Washington

TIAS, Treaties and Other International Acts Series

TO, Table of Organization

Tomac, series indicator for telegrams to the United States Delegation at the Tripartite Working Group in Paris, October–December 1953

Tomus, series indicator for telegrams to the Mutual Security Agency in Washington from its missions abroad

Tosec, series indicator for telegrams from the Department of State to the Secretary of State (or his delegation) in connection with international conferences

Tousfo, series indicator for telegrams and airgrams to the Foreign Operations Administration from missions abroad (*see* Usfoto)

trans, transportation

TS, Top Secret

USDR, *Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance,* French political party

UMDC, a Catholic militia organization in South Vietnam

UNA, Bureau of United Nations Affairs, Department of State

UNC, United Nations Command

UNCURK, United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea

UNGA, United Nations General Assembly

UNO, United Nations Organization

UNP, Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs, Department of State

UNTS, United Nations Treaty Series

UP, United Press

URAS, *Union des Républicians d'Action Sociale,* French political party

urtel, your telegram

USA, United States Army

USAF, United States Air Force

USARMA, United States Army Attaché

USDel, United States Delegation

Usfoto, series indicator for telegrams and airgrams from Foreign Operations Administration to missions abroad (*see* Tousfo)

USIA, United States Information Agency

USIS, United States Information Service

USMC, United States Marine Corps

USN, United States Navy

USNR, United States Naval Reserve

USOM, United States Operation Mission

UST, *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements*

USUN, U.S. Mission at the United Nations

VM, Viet Minh

VN, Vietnam, Vietnamese

VOA, Voice of America

WAM, United States designation for documentation related to the Washington ANZUS meeting of September 1953

WE, Office of Western European Affairs, Department of State

Weeka, weekly, interagency, summary analysis from United States diplomatic missions

WFTU, World Federation of Trade Unions

Wirom, series indicator for certain Department of State administrative telegrams

LIST OF PERSONS

Editor's Note.—Throughout this volume, individuals generally are identified in context as their names appear. This list is designed to provide ready reference for identification of those persons mentioned most frequently. The identification of the persons on this list is generally limited to positions and circumstances under reference in the volume and is confined to the years 1952–1954. All titles and positions are American unless otherwise indicated. Where no dates are given, the individual usually held the position throughout the period covered by the volume.

Acheson, Dean, Secretary of State to January 20, 1953.

Achilles, Theodore C., Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy in France from April 1, 1952; Minister of the Embassy in France from August 25, 1954.

Adams, Sherman, Assistant to the President from January 20, 1953.

Aldrich, Winthrop W., Ambassador in the United Kingdom from February 20, 1953.

Allen, George V., Ambassador in Yugoslavia to March 11, 1953; Ambassador in India from May 4, 1953.

Allison, John M., Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, to January 31, 1952; Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, February 1, 1952–April 7, 1953; Ambassador in Japan from May 28, 1953.

Anderson, Robert B., Secretary of the Navy from February 4, 1953; Deputy Secretary of Defense from May 3, 1954.

Armstrong, W. Park, Special Assistant for Intelligence, Department of State.

Auriol, Vincent, President of France to December 24, 1953.

Bao Dai, Chief of State of Vietnam.

Bidault, Georges, French Minister of National Defense to March 8, 1952; Minister of Foreign Affairs, January 8, 1953–June 18, 1954; Head of the French Delegation to the Geneva Conference, April 26–June 18, 1954.

Bohlen, Charles E., Counselor of the Department of State and Member, Senior Staff, National Security Council, to March 1953; Ambassador in the Soviet Union from April 20, 1953.

Bonbright, James C. H., Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs; from April 1954, Special Assistant to the Permanent Representative in Europe.

Bonesteel, Brigadier General Charles H., III, USA (Colonel to January 24, 1954), Assistant for National Security Council Affairs, Department of Defense, and Defense Member on the NSC Planning Board, from June 1953.

Bonnet, Henri, French Ambassador in the United States.

Bonsal, Philip W., Counselor of Embassy in France to March 1952; Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State, from August 1952.

Bowie, Robert R., Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, and State Member on the National Security Council Planning Board from May 18, 1953.

Bradley, General of the Army Omar N., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to August 14, 1953.

Brink, Brigadier General Francis G., USA, Chief, United States Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina; died June 24, 1952.

Bruce, David K. E., Ambassador in France to March 10, 1952; Under Secretary of State, April 1, 1952–January 20, 1953; Consultant to the Secretary of State to February 18, 1953; thereafter, Observer at the Interim Committee of the European Defense Community at Paris, and Representative to the European Coal and Steel Community.

Buu Loc, Prince, cousin of and adviser to Bao Dai, Chief of State of Vietnam; Bao Dai's Representative in Paris, 1952–1953; Prime Minister of Vietnam, December 17, 1953–June 16, 1954.

Cabell, Lieutenant General Charles Pearre, USAF, Director of the Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to 1953; Deputy Director of Central Intelligence from April 23, 1953.

Cameron, Turner C., Jr., First Secretary and Consul at Saigon, September 1953–March 1954, and again from September 10, 1954; Consul at Hanoi, March–September 1954.

Chou En-lai, Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China; Head of the People's Republic of China delegation at the Geneva Conference, 1954.

Churchill, Winston S. (Sir Winston from April 24, 1953), Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and First Lord of the Treasury.

Cogny, Général René, Commander of French Union Land Forces in Northern Vietnam, 1953–1954.

Collins, General J. Lawton, USA, Chief of Staff, United States Army, to August 14, 1953; U.S. Representative on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Group, August 1953–October 1954; Special Representative of the President in Vietnam with the rank of Ambassador from November 3, 1954.

Coty, René, President of France from December 23, 1953.

Cutler, Robert, Administrative Assistant to the President, January 21–March 22, 1953; thereafter, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Daridan, Jean, Minister, French Embassy in the United States, to July 1954; thereafter, French Deputy Commissioner-General in Indochina.

Davis, Vice Admiral Arthur C., USN, Deputy Representative on the Standing Group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 1952–August 1953; Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense, from November 1953; also Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs from August 13, 1954.

Day, Henry B., Deputy Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State, 1953–1954.

Dejean, Maurice, French Commissioner-General in Indochina, July 1953–June 1954.

De Castries, Colonel Christian (later Général), Commander of French Union forces at Dien Bien Phu.

De Lattre de Tassigny, Général d'Armée Jean, French High Commissioner and Commander of French Forces in Indochina, December 1950–November 1951; died January 1952.

Diem. *See* Ngo Dinh Diem.

Dillon, C. Douglas, Ambassador in France from March 13, 1953.

Drumright, Everett F., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, October 1953–October 1954.

Dulles, Allen W., Deputy Director of Central Intelligence to February 26, 1953; thereafter, Director of Central Intelligence.

Dulles, John Foster, Consultant to the Secretary of State to April 1952; Secretary of State from January 21, 1953.

Duncan, Admiral Donald B., USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

Dunn, James Clement, Ambassador in Italy to March 1[illegible], 1952; Ambassador in France, March 27, 1952–March 2, 1953; Ambassador in Spain from April 9, 1953.

Eden, Sir Anthony, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Eisenhower, Dwight D., General of the Army to July 1952; Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, to May 30, 1952; President of the United States from January 20, 1953.

Elbrick, C. Burke, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from December 16, 1953.

Ely, Général Paul, French Member on the Standing Group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1952–1953; Chief of Staff of the French Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1953–1954; Commissioner-General and Commander of French Forces in Indochina from June 4, 1954.

Erskine, General Graves B., USMC (ret.), Director of the Office of Special Operations, Department of Defense, 1953–1954; Chairman of the Working Group of the President's Special Committee on Indochina.

Faure, Edgar, Prime Minister of France to March 8, 1952.

Fechteler, Admiral William M., USN, Chief of Naval Operations to August 16, 1953; thereafter, Commander in Chief, Allied Forces, Southern Europe.

Foster, William C., Deputy Secretary of Defense to January 20, 1953.

Franks, Sir Oliver, British Ambassador in the United States to February 1953.

George, Senator Walter F., Democrat of Georgia; ranking minority member of the Foreign Relations Committee, 1953–1954.

Giao. *See* Pham Van Giao.

Giap. *See* Vo Nguyen Giap.

Gibson, William M., Deputy Director, Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State, 1952; First Secretary and Consul of the Embassy in France, from December 6, 1952.

Gifford, Walter S., Ambassador in the United Kingdom to January 23, 1953.

Gleason, S. Everett, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council.

Gruenther, General Alfred M., USA, Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe to July 11, 1953; thereafter, Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

Gullion, Edmund A., Counselor of Embassy at Saigon, 1952; Member, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, from September 26, 1952.

Hagerty, James C., Press Secretary to the President from January 21, 1953.

Harriman, W. Averell, Director for Mutual Security to January 20, 1953.

Heath, Donald R., Ambassador (Minister to June 1952) at Saigon accredited to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Appointments terminated October (Cambodia) and November (Vietnam, Laos) 1954.

Hensel, H. Struve, General Counsel, Department of Defense, August 17, 1953–March 4, 1954; Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) from March 5, 1954.

Hickerson, John D., Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs to July 27, 1953.

Hinh. *See* Nguyen Van Hinh.

Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Hoey, Robert E., Officer in Charge, Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs, Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State.

Hoover, Herbert, Jr., Consultant to the Secretary of State from October 14, 1953; Under Secretary of State from October 4, 1954.

Howe, Fisher, Deputy Special Assistant for Intelligence, Department of State.

Hull, General John E., USA, Vice Chief of Staff, United States Army, to October 6, 1953; thereafter, Commander in Chief, Far East, Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces Far East, and Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, in Korea.

Humphrey, George M., Secretary of the Treasury from January 21, 1953.

Huu. *See* Tran Van Huu.

Huy Kanthoul, Prime Minister of Cambodia to June 15, 1952.

Jackson, C. D., Special Assistant to the President, February 16, 1953–March 31, 1954.

Jessup, Philip C., Ambassador at Large to January 19, 1953.

Johnson, Senator Lyndon B., Democrat of Texas; Member of the Armed Services Committee; Minority Floor Leader, 1953–1954.

Johnson, U. Alexis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 1952–1953; Counselor of Embassy in Czechoslovakia from December 31, 1953; Coordinator of the United States Delegation to the Geneva Conference, 1954.

Key, David McK., Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (International Organization Affairs from August 25, 1954) from December 18, 1953.

Kidder, Randolph A., First Secretary and Consul at Saigon, June 1, 1953–July 22, 1954; Counselor of Embassy at Saigon from July 23, 1954.

Kimny. *See* Nong Kimny.

Knight, Ridgway B., Acting Deputy Director, Office of Western European Affairs, Department of State, 1952; Deputy Director, 1952–1954.

Knowland, Senator William F., Republican of California; Member of the Appropriations Committee and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy; Member of the Armed Services Committee, 1952, and the Foreign Relations Committee, 1953–1954; Senate Majority Leader, 1953–1954.

Kyes, Roger M., Deputy Secretary of Defense, February 2, 1953–May 1, 1954.

Labouisse, Henry R., Chief of the Mutual Security Agency Mission in France to July 1, 1953; Director of the Foreign Operations Administration Mission in France, 1953–1954.

La Chambre, Guy, French Minister in Charge of Relations with the Associated States from July 1954; French Delegate at the Geneva Conference of 1954.

Lacy, William S. B., Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State, to July 1952; thereafter, Counselor of Embassy in the Philippines.

Laniel, Joseph, Prime Minister of France, June 28, 1953–June 19, 1954.

Lansdale, Col. Edward G., USAF, Member of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina, 1954; adviser to the armed forces and government of the State of Vietnam on internal security matters.

Lay, James S., Jr., Executive Secretary of the National Security Council.

Le Van Vien, Commander in Chief of the Binh Xuyen (Vietnamese sect).

Lemnitzer, Lieutenant General Lyman L., USA (Major General to August 1, 1952), Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Research, USA, from August 1, 1952.

Letourneau, Jean, French Minister in Charge of Relations with the Associated States until July 1953; also served as French High Commissioner in Indochina, April 1952–July 19, 1953.

Lodge, Henry Cabot, Jr., Republican Senator from Massachusetts, 1952; Representative at the United Nations from January 26, 1953.

Lovett, Robert A., Secretary of Defense to January 20, 1953.

MacArthur, Douglas, II, Counselor of the Embassy in France to October 15, 1952; Counselor of the Department of State from March 30, 1953.

MacDonald, Malcolm, Commissioner General for the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia.

Makins, Sir Roger, British Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to December 30, 1952; Ambassador in the United States from January 7, 1953.

Mansfield, Michael J., Democrat of Montana, Member of the United States House of Representatives, 1952; Senator (Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee), from January 1953.

Matthews, H. Freeman, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs to October 11, 1953; Ambassador in the Netherlands from November 25, 1953.

Mayer, René, Prime Minister of France, January 8–June 28, 1953.

McBride, Robert H., Officer in Charge of French-Iberian Affairs, Department of State, 1952–1954; First Secretary of the Embassy in France, from September 25, 1954.

McCardle, Carl W., Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs from January 30, 1953.

McClintock, Robert, Counselor of Embassy at Saigon from March 10, 1953, to August 1954; Ambassador in Cambodia from October 2, 1954.

Mendès-France, Pierre, French Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs from June 19, 1954.

Merchant, Livingston T., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs to March 24, 1952; then Deputy Special Representative in Europe, at Paris, to March 11, 1953; Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from March 16, 1953.

Millet, Pierre, Counselor of the French Embassy in the United States, to September 1954; thereafter, Minister.

Minnich, L. Arthur, Jr., Assistant Staff Secretary to the President from January 21, 1953.

Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union from March 1953; Chairman of the Delegation at the Geneva Conference, 1954.

Montllor, Joseph J., Second Secretary and Consul at Phnom Penh, April 28, 1952–July 6, 1954.

Morton, Thruston B., Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations from January 30, 1953.

Murphy, Robert D., Ambassador in Belgium to March 19, 1952; Ambassador in Japan, May 9, 1952–April 28, 1953; Political Adviser to the United Nations Command on Korean Armistice Negotiations, April 28–July 11, 1953; Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs from July 28, 1953, to November 30, 1953; thereafter, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

Nash, Frank C., Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs to February 10, 1953; Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), February 11, 1953–February 28, 1954.

Navarre, Général Henri, Commander in Chief of French Union Forces in Indochina, May 1953–June 1954.

Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal, Prime Minister of India and Minister for External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations.

Ngo Dinh Diem, Vietnamese nationalist Catholic leader; Prime Minister, Minister of National Defense, and Minister of the Interior of the State of Vietnam, from June 16, 1954.

Nguyen De, Adviser to Bao Dai, Chief of State of Vietnam; Chief of the Imperial Cabinet.

Nguyen Huu Tri, Governor of Northern Vietnam, 1952–1954; leader of the Dai Viet (Vietnamese political party).

Nguyen Van Hinh, Chief of Staff of the Army of the State of Vietnam, 1953–1954; son of Nguyen Van Tam.

Nguyen Van Tam, Minister of the Interior of the State of Vietnam and Acting Governor of Northern Vietnam to June 3, 1952; Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam, June 3, 1952–December 17, 1953.

Nhiek Tioulong, General, Cambodian Director of Information, 1952; Minister of Public Works, 1953; Minister of Defense, 1954; Head of the Cambodian Military Delegation at the Geneva Conference, 1954.

Nitze, Paul H., Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, to April 1953.

Nixon, Richard M., Republican of California, Senator, 1952; Vice President of the United States from January 20, 1953.

Nolting, Frederick E., Jr. Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary of State, 1952–1953; Acting Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs from August 4, 1953; Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs from January 4, 1954.

Nong Kimny, Cambodian Ambassador in the United States from July 1, 1952.

Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia.

O'Connor, Roderic L., Assistant to the Secretary of State from January 21, 1953; Special Assistant from February 21, 1954.

O'Daniel, Lieutenant General John W., USA, Commanding General, United States Army, Pacific, September 1, 1952–April 1954; Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina, from April 12, 1954.

Offroy, Raymond, Diplomatic Counselor to the French High Commissioner in Indochina, 1952–1953; Deputy Commissioner-General, 1953–1954; French Ambassador in Thailand from May 1954.

Ogburn, Charlton, Jr., Regional Planning Adviser, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, October 1952–September 1954.

Ohly, John H., Assistant Director (Deputy to the Director) for Program, Office of the Director of Mutual Security, 1952–1953; Deputy Director for Program and Planning, Foreign Operations Administration, 1953–1954.

Ourot Souvannavong, Laotian Minister in the United States from July 13, 1953; Laotian Delegate at the Geneva Conference of 1954.

Pace, Frank, Jr., Secretary of the Army from January 20, 1953.

Partridge, General Earle E., USAF (Lieutenant General to April 1, 1954), Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, United States Air Force, June 30, 1953–March 31, 1954; thereafter, Commanding General, United States Far East Air Forces.

Penn Nouth, Prime Minister of Cambodia, 1953–1954.

Perkins, George W., Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to January 31, 1953.

Persons, Major General Wilton B., USA, Special Assistant to the President from January 21, 1953.

Pham Van Giao, Deputy Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam, 1952; Governor of Central Vietnam, 1953–1954.

Phleger, Herman, Legal Adviser, Department of State, from February 2, 1953.

Pinay, Antoine, Prime Minister of France, March 8, 1952–January 8, 1953.

Pleven, René, Prime Minister of France to January 1952; Minister of National Defense, March 8, 1952–June 19, 1954.

Radford, Admiral Arthur W., USN, Commander in Chief, Pacific, and U.S. Pacific Fleet, to July 10, 1953; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from August 15, 1953.

Raynor, G. Hayden, Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, Department of State.

Ridgway, General Matthew B., USA, Commander in Chief, Far East and Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, to May 1952; Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, June 1952–May 1953; Chief of Staff, United States Army, from August 15, 1953.

Robertson, Walter S., Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs from April 8, 1953.

Sainteny, Jean, French Delegate General in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from September 1954.

Salan, Général Raoul, Commander of French Forces in Indochina, April 1, 1952–May 1953.

Savang Vatthana, Crown Prince of Laos.

Schuman, Robert, French Minister of Foreign Affairs to January 8, 1953.

Schumann, Maurice, French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to June 1954; Deputy Chairman of the French Delegation at the Geneva Conference.

Scott, Walter K., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Administration to March 21, 1954; thereafter, Director of the Executive Secretariat.

Sihanouk. *See* Norodom Sihanouk.

Sisavang Vong, King of Laos.

Smith, General Walter Bedell, USA, Director of Central Intelligence to February 9, 1953; Under Secretary of State, February 9, 1953–October 1, 1954.

Souphanouvong, Prince, Laotian resistance leader; half-brother of Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma.

Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos.

Souvannavong. *See* Ourot Souvannavong.

Stassen, Harold E., Director for Mutual Security from January 20, 1953; Director for Foreign Operations from August 1, 1953.

Stennis, Senator John C., Democrat of Mississippi; Member of Senate Armed Services Committee.

Stevens, Robert T., Secretary of the Army from February 4, 1953.

Stewart, Major General George C., USA, Director of the Office of Military Assistance, Department of Defense, from March 1, 1953.

Sturm, Paul J., Consul at Hanoi, February 21, 1952–October 7, 1954.

Tam. *See* Nguyen Van Tam.

Tran Van Do, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Vietnam from June 16, 1954; Head of the State of Vietnam Delegation at the Geneva Conference, June 16–July 21, 1954.

Tran Van Huu, Prime Minister of Vietnam to June 3, 1952.

Tran Van Kha, Ambassador of Vietnam in the United States from July 1, 1952.

Trapnell, Major General Thomas J. H., USA (Brigadier General to May 1, 1953), Chief of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina, August 1, 1952–April 1954.

Tri. *See* Nguyen Huu Tri.

Truman, Harry S., President of the United States to January 20, 1953.

Twining, General Nathan F., USAF, Vice Chief of Staff, United States Air Force, 1952–1953; Chief of Staff from June 30, 1953.

Valluy, Général Jean E., Deputy Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe, 1952–1953; Chief of the French Military Mission and French Member of the NATO Standing Group in Washington, 1953–1954.

Vandenberg, General Hoyt S., USAF, Chief of Staff, United States Air Force, to June 29, 1953.

Van Fleet, General James A., USA, Commanding General, United States Eighth Army, in Korea, to February 11, 1953.

Vo Nguyen Giap, Minister of Defense and Vice Premier of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam; Commander in Chief of the People's Army of Vietnam.

Wilson, Charles Erwin, Secretary of Defense from January 28, 1953.

Yost, Charles W., Minister in Laos from November 1, 1954.

Young, Kenneth T., Far Eastern Specialist, Department of Defense, 1952; Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, Department of State, March 1952–September 1954; Acting Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs from September 13, 1954.

POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES WITH RESPECT TO INDOCHINA, 1952: U.S. ASSISTANCE TO FRENCH UNION FORCES; MILITARY, ECONOMIC, AND DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FOR THE ASSOCIATED STATES OF INDOCHINA

790.5/1-252 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET SAIGON, January 2, 1952—noon.

1307. Rptd info Paris 503 eyes only Bruce,[2] London 20 eyes only Gifford.[3] For personal attn Secy.

The French have now received assurances of increased US support for their operations in Indochina (re Paris 3796, December 26 on which I will comment in an early tel).[4] They will before long request further assistance, and perhaps not distant when it may be necessary for us to use all our influence persuade them maintain their forces on Indochina.

I suggest before we go further with them and before making policy commitments in SEA we shld re-examine our principal policy aims in Far East. In our view, our local policies and operations in various states and areas shld not only be consistent; they must always be subordinate.

From here it wld seem that security of the US vitally dictates as the principal objective in Far East the upsetting and eventual elimination of militant Communist control of Chinese manpower and resources backed by Sov power. To us here a policy of mere containment of Chinese Communist march appears inadequate and impracticable. Likewise, possibility of Chi Communist regime breaking with Soviets appears utterly unlikely in next years to come. We realize that if it were possible publicly and suddenly to state this dynamic policy at present moment it wld probably frighten and deter our actual and potential allies; presumably neither public nor official opinion in the US may yet be prepared for or convinced of the national necessity of such a determined program. I believe that once knowledge and conviction clearly established at the center, however, Amer and fon opinion will rally to it, impelled by the march of events.

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[1] Minister Donald R. Heath was accredited to the Kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos as well as to the State of Vietnam.

This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

[2] David K. E. Bruce, Ambassador in France.

[3] Walter S. Gifford, Ambassador in the United Kingdom.

[4] For text of the reference telegram, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 573. For Minister Heath's comments on it, see telegram 1331 from Saigon, Jan. 6, p. 10.

I believe, therefore, that future considerations re Indochina must be directed more towards its place in the Asian complex than in the French financial crisis.[5] Policies for Indochina must be judged as much for their potential contribution to the resolution of the problem of China as for their effect on the Fr balance of payments problem.

I propose, therefore, that before the three powers meet, the policy forming organs of our govt and the chiefs of the mainland Far East missions together with reps from Formosa and Japan (perhaps accompanied by their principal mil assistants) shld meet in Wash. This first mtg shld conduct a brief but fundamental review of our China and Far East policy. (Incidentally there has been no Far East chiefs mission conf since Feb 1950.)[6] This mtg cld attempt evolve a new frame of ref for the tripartite talks (re SEA) and a policy to which our allies will be invited to adhere.[7]

I say a new frame of ref because much has happened since the Singapore conf[8] which make its recommendations less pertinent. That conf narrowly mil and the Dept has recognized the need for a basic review by suggesting that further talks be on the pol plane as well as the mil.

Since Churchill[9] came to power the Brit seem to have decided to take a sterner line on China more consistent with our own.

Since Singapore the possibilities of a Far East mutual security pact have had increasing consideration in several capitals including Canberra, Wellington, Toronto [*Ottawa*], and Saigon.[10]

And as between the Allied and the Sino-Soviet worlds there may have been changes in relative strength warranting a reexamination of our policies. At the same time any hopes that we may have entertained at the time of Singapore of Viet-Minh and Chinese Titoism have become dimmer.

This consultation which I propose wld consider all of these things; it wld then perhaps set the bases for the answer to what will be the paramount question at the tripartite meeting on SEA: Whether and under what conditions, and in what relation to the UN, the US might use armed force in the case of Chinese intervention in Asiatic areas other than Korea and with what techniques, paths and partners. It might also consider what declaration might be made by the tripartite meeting as a deterrent to Chinese action in Tonkin.

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[5] Documentation on the French financial situation is printed in volume VI.

[6] For documentation on the Bangkok chiefs of mission conference of February 1950, see *Foreign Relations*, 1950, vol. VI, pp. 18 ff.

[7] Regarding the tripartite military conversations held in Washington on Jan. 11, 1952, see telegram 974 to Saigon, Jan. 15, p. 14. In telegram 918 to Saigon, Jan. 7, the Department informed Ambassador Heath that it would not be possible to follow his suggestion for a chiefs of mission meeting prior to the military conversations. (790.5/1–752)

[8] For documentation on the tripartite military talks held in Singapore in May 1951, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, pp. 64 ff.

[9] Winston S. Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom since Oct. 26, 1951.

[10] For documentation on U.S. attitudes toward a Far East mutual security pact, see volume XII.

The role of the Dept in the councils of the govt and the preservation of the confidence placed in it by the American people require that we give a lead to the forthcoming tripartite talks on SEA (Deptel 875, rptd Paris 3732, London 3108, Dec 29).[11]

The Singapore conference recommendations seem based on a pre-Korea US strategic concept rigidly rejecting the further use of any American armed force in Asia. The situation may require nothing less than a re-examination of that concept.

I believe we must never make any substantial commitment of aid to the separate countries without seeing whether it supports our overriding aim. Thus we have promised France additional arms and financial aid to IC without any attempt to explore with the Fr the possibility of their adopting a more realistic and less fearful attitude toward Chinese Communist intervention, as for example, in such matters as the internment of Chinese Nationalist troops and the denial of temporary haven to nationalist guerrilla detachments.

We are not unmindful that behind Communist China stands the Sov colossus and we do not claim a higher priority of attention for China than for Russia. Nothing cld be more fatal to the national interest than to concentrate on the one and disregard the other. We are here concerned with the sources of Soviet power. If the Chinese Communists are allowed the same full generation that was granted the Bolsheviks to consolidate their power, western influence and American friends in China will be as ruthlessly liquidated. If, during that generation, as by-products of their internal consolidation they are allowed to acquire the material surpluses and populations of SEA, the world power of communism wld be supremely difficult to dislodge or to contain. The preservation of India and Japan as democratic powers is precarious enough under present political and economic pressures; militant Chinese communism in undisputed control of the resources of the Far East mainland and armored by Soviet industry, wld make their denial the Soviet orbit well nigh impossible.

The future of Soviet power and fate of the west may well depend on our policy toward the Chinese Communists in the next few months and years.[12]

HEATH

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[11] Not printed.

[12] For documentation on U.S. policy toward the People's Republic of China, see volume XIV.

751G.5/1-352: Despatch

The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, January 3, 1952.
No. 1740

Ref: The Embassy's Telegrams Nos. 3880, December 29, 3881, December 29 and 3903, December 31, 1951.[1]

Subject: The French Government's Military Budget for Indochina and French Policy Toward Indochina

The Embassy encloses a translation of those portions of the debate in the National Assembly on December 28–29, 1951 regarding the French Government's military budget for Indochina[2] which include the speeches made by Mr. René Pleven, President of the Council, and Mr. Jean Letourneau, Minister of State in charge of Relations with the Associated States.

Summary

These statements before the National Assembly by Messrs. Pleven and Letourneau set forth French Government policy toward Indochina. They show the present preoccupation of the French Government with the possible course of events which might follow the successful conclusion of the Korean armistice negotiations[3] and a conjectured Chinese Communist invasion of Indochina. They give an indication of the French Government's attitude toward the question of an appeal to the United Nations in connection with the Indochina problem. They indicate that the French Government has no present intention of abandoning Indochina and that it considers that Indochina must remain within the French Union. They reject, although not categorically so, any idea of negotiation with Ho Chi-minh.[4] They describe the extent of the United States military assistance to the French effort in Indochina and the important part that this aid has played. For the first time, insofar as the Embassy is aware, it is made clear that General de Lattre did not during his visit to the United States in September, 1951[5] obtain an increase in the amount of United States aid. This visit is described as having resulted in an increase of the rate of deliveries and in certain changes in emphasis in order to meet essential needs. The statements also reveal French preoccupation with the recommendations of the Singapore Conference and the debate shows that the French Government is subject to criticism from members of the National Assembly in connection with the French desire for inter-allied cooperation in South East Asia. Minister Letourneau, in response to queries, stated that it was difficult to give details publicly, but he nonetheless made clear that the French Government had brought to the attention of the United States Government the need for tripartite study of the conclusions of the Singapore Conference, that the French Government had also brought the matter to the attention of President Truman and that it considered international cooperation in Indochina as indispensable. While it was stated that the French Government had no intention of withdrawing from Indochina, it was also indicated that it was important that France's allies realize that the French effort in other areas must depend upon the French effort made in Asia.

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[1] None printed.

[2] For the record of the debates, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1951, Débats*, pp. 10048–10116 *passim*.

[3] For documentation on the Korean armistice negotiations, see volume xv.

[4] President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

[5] General of the Army Jean de Lattre de Tassigny was French High Commissioner in Indochina and Commander of French Union Forces; documentation on his visit to the United States is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. vi, Part 1, pp. 332 ff.

National Assembly and Council of Republic

During subsequent debate in the National Assembly on French budgetary questions Mr. Pleven again made clear that France had no intention of abandoning Indochina. He admitted that the French effort in Indochina affected and delayed the French rearmament effort in Europe[6] but pointed out that this difficulty was the same as that faced by the British Government in maintaining troops in Malaya and Suez and for the United States in connection with its effort in Korea. Mr. Pleven said that, if the withdrawal of French troops from Indochina would assure the protection of French frontiers, the argument of the opposition would be valid. He pointed out that, even if all French troops were in France, the security of Europe would continue to depend first of all on the maintenance of solidarity among the Atlantic allies. He explained that France had chosen between "effort" and "abandonment" and continued that history proved that "abandonments" provoked new "abandonments" and that the day might arrive when France would find itself without support isolated on a little promontory in Europe.

It is interesting to note that the only sentiment in favor of negotiation with Ho Chi-minh came from the Communist side. While there was ample sentiment expressed for some kind of international solution, the exact kind of international solution envisaged was almost never made thoroughly clear. It is believed that what most members of the Assembly had in mind was some kind of overall settlement in the Far East. Minister Letourneau pointed to this possibility during the debate in the Council of the Republic on the military budget for

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[6] Documentation on French rearmament is printed in volume v.

Indochina[7] when he said that if the Korean armistice negotiations were successful, it would become possible to undertake negotiations for all Southeast Asia.

The Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF) expressed opposition both to negotiation with Ho Chi-minh and with the Chinese Communists, pointing to previous experience by France and by the United States in each case. Both in the National Assembly and in the Council of the Republic RPF spokesmen were insistent upon the desirability of tripartite cooperation in connection with the Indochina problem and throughout Southeast Asia and there was criticism of the French Government's failure to obtain commitments from its allies with respect to Indochina in connection with the Korean problem. Minister Letourneau during the debate in the Council of the Republic denied that there had been any lack of French effort directed toward obtaining inter-allied cooperation. He explained that negotiations in Korea could not be subordinated to the opening of negotiations regarding Indochina. It was at this point that he spoke of the possibility of overall negotiations if the Korean armistice were successfully concluded.

French Policy Toward Indochina

I. *Statements by Mr. Pleven:*

It is important to envisage the prospects that will be opened up if the Korean armistice negotiations were successfully concluded. If an armistice were concluded, the Chinese Communists would have the means of intervening "more heavily". In this event, the nature of the war in Indochina would change and, confronted with a clearly-defined aggression, the French Union would appeal to the United Nations. If the Korean armistice negotiations should mark a peaceful turning point, the successful conclusion of these negotiations would create "a climate favorable to a contact with China". France seeks only to improve its relations with China if the latter agrees to respect the independence of the neighboring countries which have freely joined the French Union. "Between now and then", France can do nothing but provide the credits necessary for full continuation of its present effort in Indochina and for increased assistance to the Associated States in order to accelerate the formation of the national armies of the Associated States.

II. *Statements by Mr. Letourneau:*

There is no divergence of views in the National Assembly since everyone seeks to end the war, by all means in a short time, but also with respect for the rights of the people whom France protects, with respect for their democratic customs and freedom and with respect for the rights France has acquired in Indochina over decades.

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[7] For the record of the debate under reference, see France, *Journal Officiel, Conseil de la Republic, 1952, Débats*, pp. 95–106.

There is no purely military solution for the Indochina problem and military force should lead to a peaceful solution.

The solution can eventually be sought only on the international plane.

It would be the duty of any Government to seek, as we are doing, to make possible an international solution of the conflict in the shortest time.

The Indochinese conflict, while remaining within the framework of the French Union, assumes today an international aspect.

What France wants is to be able to put an end to the conflict, to obtain a solution for the problem consistent with the honor of, and guaranteeing the security of, the French forces. This solution should assure the maintenance of the French Union, which alone will guarantee the freedom of men and the independence of the Associated States. Such is the policy the French Government is conducting in full accord with France's allies and the Associated States.

Conclusions

To sum up the French Government's attitude toward Indochina, it can be said: The French Government has no intention of withdrawing from Indochina under present circumstances; one of its essential aims is the preservation of the French Union; it has no present intention of appealing to the United Nations in connection with the Indochina problem; the French Government would welcome an opportunity to discuss the Indochina problem with the Chinese Communist regime with a view to obtaining guarantees from the latter of respect for the independence of the Associated States; France would appeal to the United Nations if the Chinese Communists intervened in Indochina "more heavily" than at present; and the French Government desires to continue its present effort in Indochina, while at the same time it looks toward increased Anglo-American sharing of the burden in Indochina in connection with tripartite cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Despite all the misgivings on the part of people both within the Government and without the Government regarding the continued drain on French resources in manpower and matériel caused by the Indochina effort and the serious misgivings regarding its effect on the French rearmament effort in Europe, both the National Assembly and the Council of the Republic approved the Government's military budget for Indochina by overwhelming majorities. The National Assembly approved this budget by a vote of 510 to 109, the only opposition coming from the Communists, although Socialist support had been accompanied by an announcement that they voted for the appropriations while hoping for an early reestablishment of peace. The Council of the Republic approved the budget by a vote of 293 to 19, the opposition again coming only from the Communist side.

Despite the overwhelming support for the Government's Indochina military budget, popular and official misgivings with respect to the French position in Indochina have been anything but erased. It is believed that prospects of an increasing sharing of the French responsibilities, primarily by the United States, the increasing possibilities of tripartite cooperation in Southeast Asia indicated by repeated references during the debate in the National Assembly to the Singapore Conference and its recommendations and the rather clear indications that the Indochina problem would be referred to the United Nations in the event of serious Chinese Communist aggression, all have served to make a continuation of the present burden in Indochina more palatable, at least for the time being. And, underlying all French thinking is the desire for the continued maintenance of the French Union, whose very foundations would be shaken by a French abandonment of, or forced retreat from, Indochina. How long the present attitude toward the Indochina burden will continue if a considerable part of the French hopes above-described is not realized is problematical.

DAVID BRUCE

751G.00/1–452 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, January 4, 1952—6 p. m.

1324. Rptd info Paris 506, London 21. Fr note on criteria on Chi Commie assault against Indochina (Paris tel 3856 to Dept, 1027 to London, Dec. 29)[1] contributes to clarification problem. There are however certain aspects of Fr presentation which seem to require further consideration.

Fr position that action of hostile Sino-VM airforce wld not be *casus belli* provided air units take off from bases inside Vietnam and that aggression wld occur only if enemy planes operate from Chi territory. Origin enemy aircraft, training air crews, sources maintenance and supply facilities wld all be unmistakably Chi. We think this problem must be approached more practically: Appearance of enemy aircraft in Vietnam whatever their jumping-off place will mark major Chi Commie aggression against Indochina. (Altho we have no evidence that is being considered it might not be beyond possibility for Chi Commies to lease or cede bases to VM republic on Liechow Peninsula or Hainan or, for a period, even to retrocede Fort Bayard to provide jurisdictional cover.)

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[1] For text, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 580.

Fr insistence that present Chi Commie aid in equip, advisers, technicians, training, and transborder bases not aggression and wld not become "genuine aggression" until effectiveness this intervention reaches "point of upsetting equilibrium of opposing forces". Thesis seems to be that test genuine aggression is its success, point of view that wld reverse much of postwar history. Obvious local danger in accepting theory is that once Chi Commie intervention has been built up to "point of upsetting equilibrium", at least Tonkin might be overrun, Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt liquidated, and Fr Union forces in north destroyed before US or UK cld act or UN consider Fr declaration that genuine aggression had at last occurred. If our or UN support to contribute to holding this vital pass it shld be given opportunity work from established Fr positions, beachheads, and airfields. Ultimate meaning Fr position almost certainly that any supporting effort wld be more difficult, more costly and probably too late.

So far as we can determine, prospects of mil support from Philippines in answer Fr appeal seem rather dim; as for effective mil support from Thai, outlook seems even dimmer. Re mil action by Atlantic Pact countries and British dominions of white race in pursuance UN recommendations in Indochina, good deal of preparatory work wld appear necessarily to have to be done. In addition to question capabilities (which forthcoming tripartite talks may explore) we have impression that Indochina situation and issues not widely known and some evangelistic effort may be required.

We take it Fr can document extent and range of Chi Commie intervention in Indochina although they have never done so. We believe Fr shld be urged document intervention case as it now exists. If it is as substantial as we believe, bipartite or tripartite consideration might indicate desirability submittal to UN before equilibrium of opposing forces is indeed upset. We fully appreciate cogency Letourneau's observation that it not absolutely certain that appeal to UN at this time wld receive reception desired (Paris tel 3881, Dec 29).[2] It all the more important that we be in position to weigh evidential strength of Fr case. Problem of UN timing together with criteria of aggression and consequent responses by France's allies must form important agenda item in forthcoming tripartite mtg.

HEATH

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[2] Not printed.

751G.00/1-652 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, January 6, 1952—6 p. m.

1331. Rptd info Paris 507, London 22. Re Paris tel to Dept 3796 Dec 26[2] *et seq.*

1. Paris tel most useful to understanding evolution Fr public opinion and its effect IC policies and Fr Govt. We in Saigon concur that situation here warrants concern Fr people and govt, and agree that forthcoming tripartite talks shld be used as opportunity to inventory polit, econ and mil position in detail to discover means improving it.

2. Fr and Assoc States public and official opinion in IC does not seem as pessimistic as that in France and there little reflection here of withdrawal psychology apparently gaining ground in Paris. Polit and commercial position of France in these states still paramount not only because she defends and finances country but because it secured to her by preferential covenants which Fr Govt seems have no intention modifying.

3. Considerations prestige and honor, strategy and history, which persuade Fr Govt stay on in IC despite faltering public opinion at home operate even more powerfully on French here. At same time they buoyed up by De Lattre's will and less conscious competitive claims Eur def on Fr resources.

Despite cost IC to Fr taxpayer, Fr investor here doing good business and there actually measure of new investment.

4. Altho margin of mil security narrow and polit progress has been slow, anyone who left here 5 years ago and came back today wld be heartened at what he sees: More order and security in towns, active commercial life, busy ports, new and self-conscious Viet Govt workers and depts, masses new Amer mil equip and Marshall Plan works and uniform of new Viet army.

5. Fr Govt also must measure progress by these signs even while it counts cost. It must do what it can sustain these advances which due in no small part to Amer assistance. Therefore, we think it reasonable to suppose that they underscore difficulties and dangers of situation to make good case for more Amer help.

6. It wld however be fatal error to overlook precarious basis on which progress rests. We unable judge Chi Commie capabilities but if frontier remains open and if our increasing heavy aid can be matched by overland deliveries to travel-light coolie armies of VM we do not foresee end war in IC for years. Present holding operation

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

[2] For text, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 573.

can perhaps be continued indefinitely but never securely and always depending upon continued Fr and Amer support; we here cannot evaluate claims of IC theatre in competition with actual and potential commitments elsewhere around perimeters Sino-Sov power but we increasingly of opinion that solution can not be found while Commies in Chi left to consolidate their powers and prepare their southward advance without being powerfully molested by Western world.

7. Even without Chi aid mil balances still delicate. Recent month long action within Tonkin Delta and on Black River has shown that VM regular forces have not declined in strength or spirit and that they can infiltrate Delta while conducting masking frontal attacks. Fr resistance has been everywhere successful, but at considerable cost due VM reaction to Fr move to Hoa Binh [3] does not make one too confident that Fr offensive in near future can go far. And 20 fighters and as many bombers used systematically by VM or Chi cld jeopardize even holding operation.

8. Viet army, of which major portion still constituted by troops transferred from Fr Union forces rather than new drafts upon population, still has only rudimentary complement offs and staff. Altho its first battle tests on battalion scale have been satis, it must be reckoned an unknown quantity.

9. It also true that De Lattre–Bao Dai,[4] Franco-Viet formula has failed stimulate much "mil-politico dynamism" in the country. Fr put security and mil operations first. They confess that present Huu [5] Govt commands little popular support, but admit inability find reliable and able Viets who wld join new govt and cooperate loyally in frame of Franco-Viet understanding. Such popularity as Huu has enlisted has been largely by scoring off Fr and is result of approachment between him and certain groups such as Cao Daists and "third force natlists" whom Huu began seek out when he recently fell into disfavor with Bao Dai and De Lattre.

One of least commented and most important recent polit phenomenon has been rise of third force movements, notably Cao Daist Col The [6] with several thous armed adherents. Govt and Fr reluctant tackle them militarily at this time and they exercise gravitational pull on Huu Govt toward weakening Fr tie, as well as kind of suspense veto on important measures such as mobilization in areas which they control.

10. "Dynamism" still feeble because of inability to solve problem Franco-Viet relations or because Viets fail or refuse believe that it

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[3] In November 1951, French paratroops occupied the strategically located town of Hoa Binh, 40 miles southwest of Hanoi. They were soon heavily engaged by Viet Minh forces.

[4] Chief of State of Vietnam.

[5] Tran Van Huu, Prime Minister of Vietnam.

[6] Trinh Minh The.

has been solved. While France cannot now materially relax its fin and mil control there much that can be done to make Viets believe that Govt his govt, to confer on him certain elementary econ and polit rights, and convince him that he has something to fight for. Fr will be handicapping themselves unnecessarily until they can get govt with some popular support. De Lattre sees this problem. We assume tripartite mtg will go into polit premises of tripartite action here including domestic Franco-Viet relationship.

11. Before his departure Gen De Lattre reaffirmed with force and sincerity that he cld decide issue here in 15 to 18 months. Bao Dai and Huu echo this estimate, but probably on basis exaggerated anticipation of Viet army accomplishments. New Premier Pleven, whom Emb describes as seeing no end in sight, has advanced De Lattre's estimate in debates on Fr budget. Whether, since recent VM counterattacks and stepped up Chi aid, De Lattre cld maintain this forecast with same sincerity I do not know. From Saigon we see no Fr Gen other than De Lattre who cld make good this time table with means at hand and in prospect.[7]

12. We believe that Fr leaders inclined consciously or unconsciously to disculpate themselves in advance of responsibility for possible deterioration in situation by minimizing amount US aid laid down in IC and over-stating promises they claim have recd. Strenuous efforts shld be made in tripartite talks and publicly in Wash, Paris and Saigon to set records straight. We preparing here to issue review of US mil aid, but we believe some public statement shld be made around time tripartite talks by principal govt of giving dol figures for our over-all aid to France and IC.

13. No one more fully appreciates efforts and sacrifices required of Fr maintain IC than do we. We not persuaded that abandonment IC within next few months might not create as many problems for Fr as it wld solve, in permitting Sov world to increase its pressures at other points, some of them involving France's vital interests. With recently increased Amer aid and with sustained high leadership, this not moment for defeatism with ref IC. If Chi come in stakes become urgently world wide with US biggest stake holder.

14. We find it difficult know what Fr Govt leaders have in mind as they reflect on internatlizing problem of IC. If they envision some kind multipartite negots, including Chi Commies and VM, Leg wld reiterate that this merely means installing Commies in power in IC. We cannot visualize any UN arbitration or award on issue IC that wld not produce awkward divisions among friendly nations. Settlement es-

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[7] General de Lattre de Tassigny had departed for France on Nov. 19, 1951. He died of cancer in Paris on Jan. 11, 1952.

tablishing truncated IC in Kor pattern wld do little more than delay collapse of anti-Commie position.

Internatlizing probably boils down to stipulating use US force if burden becomes too great for France or if Chi invades. We concur with Paris that we will probably and eventually be faced with situation in which we will have to offer new commitments if we wish Fr maintain effective resistance. We have already suggested that supreme effort be made reconsider all aspects Chi policy, including our reaction in case further expansion and we assume tripartite talks will explore possibilities increased aid.

We will offer our suggestions for agenda and positions in subsequent tel.

HEATH

751G.00/1–852 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 8, 1952—2 p. m.

1344. Repeated Paris 512, London 23, New Delhi 11. On Pres Huu's orders govt-owned news service excised for obvious reasons from its bulletin today the following passage in Schuman's[1] exposé before MRP meeting at Toulouse Jan 6:

> "In Indochina our policy is a policy of peace. It is not preoccupied by any spirit of imperialism or conquest. Without wishing to abandon Fr interests in this country nor those who have placed confidence in us, nor open the door to communism we do not refuse there either any agreement which might be susceptible to bringing to an end the dolorous conflict which for five years has torn this country apart. If an armistice can be concluded under honorable conditions France will not hesitate to make peace.

If Schuman's statement contained additional passages on Indochina we wld appreciate pertinent text by cable. We note this may be first occasion on which Fr FonOff has invited political negotiations.

Local centers of neutralism and appeasement which had remained quiescent through recent Pleven and Letourneau parliamentary statements have reacted very quickly to what they regard as Schuman's lead. For past several days local press has carried series stories re Fr-Brit insistence on FE *détente*, on linking Indochina to Korean negotiations in over-all FE "settlement" which wld admit Chi Commies planning liquidate Formosa, and bring peace in our time. Press has suggested Churchill wld exert all his influence along these lines and Stalin's[2] reported willingness to meet Big Three in Stockholm to discuss FE solution has had due attention along with Vishinsky's[3] proposal to move Korean talks to UN.

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[1] Robert Schuman, French Foreign Minister.

If these Fr initiatives had been discussed with US we assume we wld have been advised. If they have not they represent at least a portentious lack of coordination. In Indochina the Pleven–Schuman–Letourneau series threatens the Vinh Yen program of psychological mobilization and may work grave injury to De Lattre's patient attempts to build Vietnamese confidence and to convince the listless and the careful that this is their war.

In these muddied waters the Indians have begun to fish. Our first news of Schuman's declaration and our first info that it had been censored came from an exalted Kamath, the Indian ConGen here, who had heard of statement on Indian broadcast early this morning and who had received its cabled text few hours later. This surprising Indian forehandedness echoes Indian UN del statement Jan 4 that India was certain Chi Commies would not invade "Fr Indochina" unless Americans first attacked Manchuria or Chi mainland, and, as if in reply to suggestions that Indochina conflict be "internationalized", volunteered opinion it was "normal practice" for Peking to send administrators to VM and train VM units in Chi terr. No doubt Kamath, whose views on Indochina are as unchanging as Nehru's[4] is busy on the wires to Delhi. We may soon be confronted with Indian or Indian-backed proposal to mediate Indochina or to submit Indochina war to UN with all the trappings of a cease-fire, a plebiscite, or UN-sponsored, observed elections, coalition govt and the other devices which wld only result in the surrender of Indochina to the Chi Commies.

We assume Paris is ascertaining Fr intentions and anticipations re Schuman's latest gambit and that we shall coordinate our responses to possible Asian attempts to produce Asian Munich.

HEATH

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[2] Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union; Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

[3] Andrey Yanuaryevich Vyshinsky, Soviet Foreign Minister.

[4] Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India.

790.5/1–1552: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Legation at Saigon

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, January 15, 1952—6:42 p. m.

974. Eyes only Heath. Code clerk: This msg to be delivered to Mr. Heath for his eyes only.

Tripartite mil conversations held Washington Jan 11[1] concerning defense SEA were convened through direct negots between three Chiefs of Staff. Only at last moment were single reps of each FonOff permitted to be present as observers. Dept had no opportunity contribute to agenda nor formally participate in discussions. Nevertheless Leg tels concerning this subj were and are most helpful.

Part one of agenda entitled "Exchange of Views with Respect to Southeast Asia" consists of two pts.

1. Problems of SEA in light of world wide implications of situation, and
2. Defense SEA including action in event of deterioration of situation.

Part two concerned recommendations of Singapore Conference.

Summary of discussions covering both Parts has been given to Bartlett[2] for transmittal to Leg. He is expected to arrive Saigon approx Jan 26.

Fol is brief summary of discussions on Part one.

1. Gen Bradley[3] advised Gen Juin[4] that he was unable to commit his govt at this time as to extent and character of US mil assistance in event of massive Chi intervention. This subj being considered at highest official level as matter of urgency. Field Marshal Slim[5] concurred. Juin appealed for US and UK dispatch of air and naval support if not ground forces. Air cover necessary to allow his forces to retire on Haiphong.

2. Juin stated, under instrs from his govt, that fol massive Chi intervention Fr Union forces wld retire to Haiphong and fight to last man. Air cover needed for this operation while naval assistance needed in evacuating 50,000 Fr and Indochina civilians. Juin stated that if Haiphong held, invasion of IC difficult or impossible.

3. Three Chiefs agreed to recommend to their govts the transmittal of a declaration to Red China that aggression against SEA wld bring certain retaliation from the three powers, not necessarily limited to the area of aggression. An *ad hoc* comite of reps of the three powers plus Austral and NZ was appointed to study and report urgently on the measures the five govts might take singly or jointly in event Red China failed heed warning.[6] Above two steps resulted from mutual

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[1] The minutes of the tripartite conversations conducted in Washington on Jan. 11 by military representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, and related documentation, are included in the compilation on general policies of the United States with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area, in volume XII.

[2] Frederic P. Bartlett, First Secretary, Legation at Saigon.

[3] General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[4] General of the Army Alphonse Juin, General Inspector of the French Army, Navy, and Air Force.

[5] Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff of the United Kingdom.

[6] The report of the *ad hoc* committee, Feb. 5, is included in documentation on general policies of the United States with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area, in volume XII.

recognition that present problems consist of (1) discouragement against aggression and (2) retaliation.

4. All agreed that Chi aggression against SEA might well mean war with China.

5. Neither the recommendation as to proposed declaration nor the report of *ad hoc* comite have been recd by Dept.

6. It shld be noted that the language of proposed declaration must still be approved by each of the five govts concerned as well as joint agreement reached concerning method and timing of transmittal to Red China. Likewise, the recommendations of *ad hoc* comite which wld presumably be of very broad nature wld necessarily influence course of action of the five govts with respect to transmittal proposed declaration.

Bartlett has been fully briefed and Leg will be informed of developments as they occur.

ACHESON

751G.00/1–1552 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Department of State

SECRET

PARIS, January 15, 1952—8 p. m.
[Received January 16—3 : 40 a. m.]

4203. Rptd info Saigon 268, London unn. Pass MSA. Griffin,[1] accompanied by Emb officer, called on Min Assoc States Letourneau this morning. Conversation lasting better part of hour covered wide range questions, during which Min Letourneau emphasized his chief concern security French Union forces IC and gave no indication Fr Govt has in view any change in Fr policy or any new ideas about how to deal with IC problem.

In reply to Min's query, Griffin said thing that struck him most in present IC situation, based to considerable extent on conversations with Fr officers in areas he had recently visited, was lack of interest on part Vietnamese Govt in Vietnamese people and gen apathy of people toward govt. Min agreed and said that despite Fr efforts give increasing independence to Vietnamese latter were incapable of independence. He said that if Fr withdrew tomorrow Vietminh wld be in control within 2 days. Min bemoaned lack of competent Vietnamese officials and said that almost anyone who might be appointed to important post wld within matter of months revert to same standards of official competence as that of present officials. Min was critical of Tran Van Huu's lack of budget, his holding of four key ministerial posts and his gen inability to inspire popular support. He posed question to Griffin re desirability some kind of elected assembly and said that, while present perhaps not time for such action, it might be given serious consideration. He added that such assembly wld serve as check on Vietnamese Govt expenditures, which now subj only to Huu's desires, but that assembly might create more difficulties. When Griffin referred to effectiveness of ex-governor Tri [2] in reply to Min's query re possible leadership, latter said that difficulty was that Tri was Tonkinese and wld not be effective in dealing with Cochin Chinese. He stressed traditional differences between Tonkin, Annam and Cochin China.

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[1] R. Allen Griffin, Director of the Far East Program Division, Economic Cooperation Administration, 1950–1951. As ECA Special Far East Representative, Griffin visited Indochina and other East Asian areas in late 1951, subsequently visiting Paris.

Min said Bao Dai was best hope but that he refused to take nec action and that Bao Dai's chief interest now seemed to be his desire to come to France. He said that he hoped to have frank talk with Bao Dai after his arrival in IC next week, where he is proceeding at beginning of week, and said that with Griffin's concurrence he wld like to pass onto Bao Dai substance of this conversation. Griffin agreed. Min said he expected have talk with Bao Dai's chief of Cab De,[3] whom he described as very capable and who is coming for De Lattre's funeral ceremonies. He said that Huu had wanted to come but that this had been warded off.

Griffin explained that purpose of ECA program in Indochina had been polit in that it represented effort to build up popularity of govt, to gain public support for it and to convince people that govt had their interests at heart. Griffin said that progress [*program*] had not achieved its purpose because Vietnamese Govt had not utilized it effectively. Min said that Indochina problem was polit rather than milit and said that he hoped that something cld be done to improve situation.

Referring to milit situation Black River area, he said that situation was not as bad as Fr press had described it. He said that he had telephoned Fr newspapers last night to say that according official reports from Indochina Hoa Binh was not encircled and that Fr trucks still traveling along route. In answer query re French plane losses, he said 2 planes had recently been shot down and 8 returned with bullet holes. He dismissed as untrue report in yesterday's New York *Herald Tribune* that Vietminh had radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns. Referring to SEA talks at Wash, he said that Juin appeared to be generally satis with results of talks but that feels Letourneau did not consider that any results cld be obtained from such talks unless they were on polit levels since milit talks always came to question of polit decision on important matters under discussion. There was agreement re importance IC to free world position in SEA and that problem was of common concern to UK, France and US. Letourneau said rather forcefully that if Commie planes appeared over Tonkin Fr wld immed appeal to UN on basis Chi intervention, altho he expressed some skepticism re possible UN reaction to such appeal.

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[2] Nguyen Huu Tri, former Governor of Northern Vietnam.
[3] Nguyen De, Chief of the Imperial Cabinet.

There appeared to be gen agreement between Min and Griffin that present govt was not effective. Griffin pointed out that more effective govt might well be less loyal to Fr and thus create in relations with France more difficulties while gaining popular support in process. Letourneau agreed but did not elaborate. Gen impression gained from conversation is that Letourneau has no fixed plans or ideas about what he expects to do after arrival IC except that he apparently expects to have very frank talk with Bao Dai with view urging Bao Dai assert his authority more forcefully and effectively. There might be read into this implication that Huu may be replaced but Letourneau gave no indication of possible successor altho he did praise Security Min Tam.[4]

Throughout conversation Griffin, referring to desirability some step which wld have dramatic effect in rallying support to Vietnamese Govt, left opening for Min to make some suggestion. While latter agreed this desirable, he did not pursue subj and gave no indication Fr thinking along such line.

Griffin has seen tel and concurs.

BRUCE

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[4] Nguyen Van Tam, Vietnamese Minister of Security; Acting Governor of North Vietnam.

751G.551/1–1752 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, January 17, 1952—8 p. m.

1442. Rptd info Paris 544, Hanoi unn. Death of Marshal De Lattre has been staggering for all sectors French Union opinion in IC. Although official western circles had rumors his illness more serious than had been admitted, French info policy had prepared neither Associated States govts nor public for this tragic possibility. Its entire unexpectedness has added greatly to public's shocked dismay.

It difficult, perhaps premature, to assess effect De Lattre's death. Past week has been spent in rituals of memorial. Periods mourning have been decreed by French and Associated States govts, Christian and Buddhist masses held throughout IC, press almost exclusively devoted to eulogies and panegyrics of one of France's greatest soldiers, exchanges condolences among chiefs state and their reps have marked tribute of free world.

For moment all governmental activity has come to standstill. Previous appointments Gautier and Salan respectively as interim HICOM and C-in-C originally aroused little enthusiasm and now viewed with more misgivings and, in some quarters, with almost open opposition to this division auth and counsel.[1] It generally realized new appointment must await reconstitution French Govt and most local observers seem pessimistic about length period required and character tenuous majority which will emerge. Names Catroux,[2] Letourneau, and De Chevigne[3] heard most frequently with French mil vocal on need for continuation combined command under mil.

We agree entirely with Paris tel 4176, Jan 14, effect of De Lattre's death most important psychologically.[4] There seems gen impression that with passing De Lattre period in Franco-Viet relations, perhaps even entire Mar 8 experiment,[5] has come to close and an equally widespread fear that without De Lattre France will not be able or willing summon physical means and moral strength to continue struggle. In universal expression of sorrow the undercurrent mourning not only for De Lattre but for IC.

Only stabilizing factors in past few days have been ref to SEA in Truman–Churchill communiqué,[6] President's mention IC in his Congressional message,[7] and Eden's strong warning to Chinese Commies in his Columbia University address.[8] Unfortunately these have not been matched by any similar expression from French side. General Juin's statement at conclusion tripartite talks that he entirely satisfied but [garble] no statement has been excessively cryptic for local public demanding reassurance and encouragement. Letourneau's announcement that he proceeding to IC[9] to give assurance that work of De Lattre will be continued has seemed somewhat equivocal when set against background of twilight utterances of Pleven govt[10] on negots and "internationalization." Arrival of parliamentary natl defense investigation comite has further added to feeling uncertainty for its mission generally linked to expressions in French Parliament that IC war cld not be continued. Indeed it as much this French political background as IC mil situation that has made De Lattre's death seem such an appalling loss to French forces here who looked to De Lattre as their protector against political merchandising and compromise. De Lattre's promise to lead his men always in paths of honor frequently recalled in connection with possibility of one successor or another.

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[1] Following the departure of Gen. de Lattre de Tassigny for France in November 1951, Georges Gautier, Secretary-General to the French High Commission in Indochina, was named Acting High Commissioner and Gen. Raoul Salan, Commander of French Union Forces in Southern Vietnam, was appointed Acting Commander in Chief.

[2] General Georges Catroux, French High Commissioner in Indochina, 1939–1940; Ambassador to the Soviet Union, 1945–1948.

[3] Pierre de Chevigné, French High Commissioner in Madagascar, 1948–1949; Secretary of State for Defense in various cabinets during the period 1951–1954.

[4] In the reference telegram, Ambassador Bruce stated the following: "Opinion most frequently expressed here in Fr official circles re consequences De Lattre's death is that its effect will be most important psychologically on morale in IC among all circles. It is realized that De Lattre's presence there had contributed more than anything else to restoration confidence and morale." (751G.551/1-1452)

[5] Reference is to the agreement between France and Vietnam contained in an exchange of letters of Mar. 8, 1949, between Vincent Auriol, President of France, and Bao Dai, former Emperor of Annam (who became Chief of State of Vietnam). For the text of this agreement regulating relations between the two states, see France, Direction de la Documentation, *Notes et Etudes Documentaires*, No. 1147 (June 20, 1949), pp. 3–14, or Margaret Carlyle, ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1949–1950*, Royal Institute of International Affairs (London, Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 596–606. An English translation of the major portion of the agreement appears in Allan W. Cameron, ed., *Viet-Nam Crisis: A Documentary History*, vol. I: 1940–1956 (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 120–129.

[6] President Truman and British Prime Minister Churchill met in Washington during the period Jan. 5–18, 1952. No decisions were taken on Indochina pending the tripartite military discussions of Jan. 11. In their communiqué of Jan. 9, the two leaders stated: "We are glad that the Chiefs of Staff of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France will be meeting in the next few days to consider specific measures to strengthen the security of Southeast Asia." For the full text of the communiqué, see Department of State *Bulletin*, Jan. 21, 1952, pp. 83–84. Documentation on the Truman–Churchill talks is printed in volume VI.

In this interim period best one can hope for perhaps is maintenance this depression of spirit. If French crisis prolonged or if third-rater named to IC mood of public may pass to active defeatism, possibility which will be rendered more acute if Tonkin mil operations become more critical. We fully appreciate slight latitude of discretion left Pleven cabinet; we must say that if psychological situation not to slip back to its Dec 1950 ebb what needed from somewhere in French Union apparatus is ringing reaffirmation of De Lattre's own motto "ne pas l'subir" and program by France and her allies to make that resistance meaningful to IC peoples.

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[7] Reference is to President Truman's State of the Union Message, Jan. 9. During the course of the address, the President twice mentioned the necessity for aid to Indochina to hold back Communist aggression. For text, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1952–1953* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 9–17.

[8] In his address at Columbia University on Jan. 11, Anthony Eden, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated the following: "In Indo-China the French have been fighting a defensive battle with utmost difficulty—at heavy cost and with a severe drain on their resources. Today we salute the memory of their great soldier-statesman General De Lattre. In Malaya, we, for our part, have been waging a long and bitter struggle against guerrilla forces. These positions must be held. It should be understood that the intervention by force by Chinese Communists in South-East Asia—even if they were called volunteers—would create a situation no less menacing than that which the United Nations met and faced in Korea. In any such event the United Nations should be equally solid to resist it." (Extract from Eden Speech: Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 112) The full text of the speech is printed in the *New York Times* of Jan. 12.

[9] Jean Letourneau, French Minister for the Associated States, arrived in Saigon on Jan. 25.

[10] The government of René Pleven resigned on Jan. 7 following its defeat in the National Assembly on a vote of confidence in connection with the Finance Bill. Edgar Faure was elected Premier by the Assembly on Jan. 18. The new government, presented on Jan. 20, was very similar in composition to its predecessor.

HEATH

751G.00/1-2552 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 25, 1952—8 p. m.

1488. Rptd info Paris 556. Yesterday evening saw Gen Salan who came to Saigon to meet Min Letourneau arriving this morning.

Salan said he entirely confident that Fr Union forces wld throw back VM. From captured docs Fr had learned VM had anticipated carrying on three months offensive. Two months had passed and he doubtful VM cld carry on attacks on present scale in view heavy losses for another month. He thought by end month VM wld have to abandon major offensive operations for time. He more than ever conviced occupation Hoa-Binh was shrewd move. He confident he cld hold it.

It true that during offensive VM had succeeded infiltrating equivalent one regiment at Bao-Ninh and equivalent two regiments at Nam-Dinh. This troublesome and worrying but Fr Union forces wld be able dislodge VM. Vietnam army units had handled themselves well. What was lacking were qualified battalion commanders. Lieutenants and Capts good.

He wld have to spend practically his entire time at Hanoi where at any time there he wld give me or my rep entirely truthful picture of sitn whether it favorable or adverse.

He smilingly avoided direct answer to my question as to whether he cld now repeat prediction of De Lattre in Wash last Sept that in 18 months rebellion wld be reduced police proportions by remarking that since that date Chi had greatly increased supplies of all sorts to VM.

He admitted possibility of direct Chi invasion in force in which case his forces wld be insufficient. He wld be opposed to any participation Chi Nationalist troops in operations in Tonkin delta. They wld only complicate operations. Chi Nationalist guerilla forces under control of Formosa regime might, however, be very usefully employed from north Thailand or Burma. This operation which shld be actively studied.

With regard Amer supplies, he had informed Fr Parliamentary comite that he did not have enough automotive transport but he now knew sufficient shipments had arrived Saigon or were en route to make up this deficiency. He hoped very much to obtain some of new equipment our troops using in Korea. He thought that shortly arrangements wld be made to have qualified Fr observers there in Kor.

He understands we now using napalm mines before defensive positions in Korea. He said no matter how one constructs a defense works there always points of feeble fire or no fire cover. Napalm contact land mines cld be laid to protect such blind spots and wld have advantage also of illuminating night attacks. He also interested in infrared sights for night fire.

He wld return to Hanoi with Letourneau shortly after latter's arrival, stopping briefly at Dalat to see Bao Dai. He said he wld very strongly urge Bao Dai to make more visits and inspections of Vietnam troops. Bao Dai's visit Hoa-Binh had been good thing. Bao Dai shld spend more time at Hanoi.

HEATH

751G.11/1–3052: Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 30, 1952—8 p. m.

1505. Rptd info Paris 559. Jan 27 Vietnamese New Year, as dean dipl corps I delivered address at Dalat which I said in this critical year eyes of the world were on Bao Dai in hope he wld lead Vietnam towards victory and stability. (Text by despatch.)[1]

Fol day had talk with Bao Dai. He started with long pessimistic diatribe on Vietnamese fin and polit situation and state of relations with Fr concluded by suggesting novel "solution".

He had made a canvass of possible successors to Huu and cld not find one with requisite prestige or ability for the job. Ngo Dinh Diem[2] was best known but this prestige and favor extended only to Catholic community embracing but a tenth of Vietnamese population. Further Diem was an "incapable" obstinate and inordinately proud. Ex-Gov Tri had real ability but shown himself slave to Dai Viet party without ideals or true program except establish authoritarian monopoly of polit power. There were many who professed patriotism but in office they wld he felt show same vanity and personal ambition which characterized Huu. In the entire cabinet, only one man, Tam Min Natl Security, was really doing his job. Huu was suspicious, jealous and wld give none of his collaborators requisite liberty of action. Giao,[3] ex-Gov of Annam wld make a better Prime Min than Huu. I observed I was good friend of Giao, realized his good qualities but there were admitted defects in his governorship of Annam. Bao Dai said Giao wld be all right under his close control. I said it wld have to be close.

The fin situation of Vietnam was as unpromising as the political

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[1] The text of Ambassador Heath's address is contained in telegram 1497 from Saigon, Jan. 28, 1952, not printed. (851G.424/1–2852)

[2] A prominent leader of the Vietnamese Catholic community.

[3] Pham Van Giao.

Bao Dai said. Three billion piastres wld be needed for Viet natl army in 1952, and only one billion wld be available from Viet revenue. Fr had not promised meet this deficit.

I observed before such aid cld be considered it wld be necessary for govt to present an authentic budget. Bao Dai said he "cld not understand" why Huu had not yet submitted budget. I replied that Bao Dai cld force Huu to take such action if he only exerted his auth. Bao Dai said a dangerous stalemate of incompatibility with Fr had been reached which requires bold effective solution. Fr must cease "annoying" interventions in internal polit matters coupled with menaces of cutting off fin aid. I observed that he cld object and effectively resist Fr intervention in purely internal matters if he wld firmly take the reins of govt. As regards the fin situation I thought that Fr and even ourselves has every right to intervene to the extent of "control" in the Fr sense of the word and consultation. The fact was Vietnam was a bankrupt country dependent mainly on Fr and to a lesser extent on US. I reminded that in a previous interview he had himself argued we shld exert some effective control on Huu govt financial operation.

Bao Dai went on to say it was time for Fr to declare what their real aims were. They must have some concrete aims which, he hoped, did not contemplate a return towards colonialist control. I remarked it wld be impossible for Fr turn the clock back to colonial control even if they wanted to. As to Fr aims it seemed fairly clear that questions of natl prestige were involved and the protection of nascent Fr Union with which Fr, along gen lines of Brit commonwealth expects to transform its former imperial possessions and its protectorates. Letourneau had said if Assoc States were lost Fr Union was doomed. I understood Fr made no secret of expectation of some econ assurances and preferences along line of Brit imperial preferences. There was also legitimate desire to maintain a certain currency of Fr language and culture in Indochina. Bao Dai said time had come to get off the plane of sentiment to one of reality. I remarked that in my own conversations with Letourneau I had found him frank and realistic.

Bao Dai said that perhaps it wld not be utterly tragic if Chinese were to invade. He cld found and lead effective resistance against the Chi, the hated traditional enemy. I remarked that Chi would work thru the puppet VM which with Commie ruthlessness and efficiency wld speedily do away with all potential leaders of resistance. At present time only Fr Union forces kept Vietnam from becoming Chi Colony.

[Garble] Bao Dai then came to "solution" of present difficulty with Fr.

He said it not his idea but De Lattre's. Prior latter's departure Fr Gen Le Cocq had raised with De Lattre question his successor in case latter's health prevented his staying on in Indochina. After reflection De Lattre had reportedly replied that no French shld be given combined functions commanding gen and HICOM. Bao Dai shld be appointed as successor. Bao Dai commented he wld be nominally CIC with Gen Salan technically acting as his chief staff. Fr civil functions wld likewise be under his control with Gautier having title polit advisor. Such solution wld go far towards allaying Viet fear of restoration Fr colonialism. Bao Dai wld take over active control Viet govt and army. Up to present, he asserted, it wld have been neither desirable nor practical for him to do so. I said that I had great respect for his intel but inquired bluntly whether he realized punishing load of work and responsibility he wld have to undertake. He cld not stay in mountains—he wld have to move to Saigon and Hanoi. Was he physically and otherwise prepared take over this workload of responsibility? He asserted he was ready. Whether or not Fr Govt granted him such titles or powers, I told him I felt that if he wld come down and assume active supervision his govt and his army, and make sustained effort of will he wld succeed. As I have said in my address to him year was critical. He had little time to lose.

Bao Dai said that he cld not actively take over reins govt unless Fr increased his powers. He felt that during his previous stays in France he had accomplished much more for true Viet independence than when he resident in Vietnam. He had even thought of making trip to France with that idea in view but it frowned upon by Fr. I observed that I wld also greatly regret to see him leave his country at this tide of its affairs. Bao Dai said death De Lattre was greatest loss, not only from mil point of view but from polit since De Lattre had finally come realize that this impetuous intervention into Viet polit affairs counterproductive, and that he and De Lattre had finally established real consultative partnership. He terminated interview by saying he felt he cld count on me as sincere friend and advisor. I confirmed this but said that with him absent from Saigon it difficult make our friendship very effective.

Comment: I have no idea how Fr wld take suggestion he be named HICOM and CIC. In Brit Commonwealth there precedent in recent appointment of an Australian and a Canadian being named high command Gov-Gen respectively. Actually I think Fr might be well advised consider some such romantic step in effort to break polit impasse. Whether with these powers and titles Bao Dai wld effectively exert himself is of course open to question. It shld be possible to convince him to take continued residence in Saigon and Hanoi where he wld be available to good advice and control.

HEATH

751H.00/1-3152 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 31, 1952—8 p. m.

1512. Sent Paris unn, Tokyo unn, Manila unn, Hanoi unn, Phnom Penh unn.

I talked with Huy Kanthoul, Cambodian PriMin yesterday when latter arrived Saigon welcome King Norodom Sihanouk returned from cruise to Japan and Phil.

Kanthoul and King both grateful for attentions of Amer officials in Tokyo and Manila. King extremely pleased to have been recd by Gen Ridgway.[1]

Kanthoul said he had various questions to treat with Min LeTourneau, particularly the slow operation of Assoc States General Bank and slow formation of the Camb Natl Army. Kanthoul was apprehensive lest "spontaneous", anti-Fr manifestations by the people occur during LeTourneau's forthcoming visit to Phnom Penh. I said it wld be extremely regrettable if such manifestations occurred. We were worried over indications Fr public opinion was becoming increasingly tired of the financial strain and losses in Fr mil effort in Indochina. I remarked in effect only Fr Union Forces prevented the Assoc States from becoming satellite colonies of Commie Chi. With the best of luck and support it wld be considerable time before Natl Armies cld hold the Pass. The US was helping generously toward the war effort here but we had no troops to replace any Fr forces which might be withdrawn.

Today I mentioned to Min LeTourneau and Acting HICOM Gautier I had heard there was some apprehension anti-Fr popular manifestations in Cambodia during LeTourneau's visit. They told me the Fr Com of Cambodia had already reported the possibility and remarked such manifestations cld only occur if Cambodian Govt were negligent or tolerant.

HEATH

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[1] General Matthew B. Ridgway, United States Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE); Commander in Chief, United Nations Command in Korea (CINCUNC); and Supreme Commander, Allied Powers in Japan (SCAP).

751G.00/2-152 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 1, 1952—10 a. m.

1515. Rptd info Paris 562. Letourneau gave luncheon for ranking Amers here and included Ginsberg, natl comm Jewish war vets presently visiting Saigon.

After luncheon had long talk alone with Letourneau who asserted morale Fr troops on north good altho fighting bitter; that Salan felt sure sitn well in hand; that Hoa-Binh occupation had gravely embarrassed VM operations as shown by their costly attacks there against Fr forces and communications. Letourneau had long talk yesterday with Huu in which he told latter there not slightest intention France to cause downfall Huu Govt but France must insist he reorganize cabinet to provide efficient admin. He told Huu latter really afraid of peace (and departure Fr troops) because he must realize that unless govt greatly strengthened it wld fall to VM out of sheer weakness without any attack being made against it. He had insisted that Huu produce budget. Said Huu took these criticisms in bad part and insisted govt efficient. Huu intimated this insistence on his publishing budget was due to Amer pressure. Huu argued he had refused show Americans budget because lacking full auth of Fr. Letourneau replied that budget was not something to keep secret but to show to everyone. Letourneau said he felt irate at constant ref to Huu's govt as a "puppet" govt. He tempted think it wld be very fine to have puppet govt but not puppet govt that was always snarling at him. Huu tried curry favor with rabid natlist by attacking France but had failed.

Letourneau leaves tomorrow for Dalat for two day conf with Bao Dai. He will emphasize Fr will be unwaveringly loyal in supporting Bao Dai. Fr Govt had not asked some 30 odd nations to recognize transitional cab but permanent state of Vietnam as symbolized by Bao Dai as chief state. As for rumors Fr wld attempt conclude some peace settlement with VM it practically inconceivable that any such settlement cld be obtained by negot. If against all likelihood, it shld become possible to negot an end to hostilities, Fr Govt wld not take slightest step without full prior auth of Bao Dai with full regard to latter's position as chief state.

Letourneau asked how Bao Dai seemed during my talk with him. I said Bao Dai concerned with difficulty in now manning efficient govt, financial difficulties Vietnam and unresolved stalemate of "incompatibility" between Fr and Viets. Since Bao Dai had so auth me, I mentioned to Letourneau alleged statement De Lattre (see Legtel 1505, rptd Paris 559, Jan 30) that in case of termination his mission no Frenchman shld be given combined function com gen and high comm but these titles shld be vested in Bao Dai. I told him I had not discussed this "idea" at length but assumed Bao Dai meant that title of CIC at least wld be nominal without his exercising direct command. Letourneau did not reject this idea as violently as I had expected. He said of course Bao Dai cld not command Fr forces but as chief state he wld be comm Viet Natl Army. It very important that Bao Dai have more than nominal command of Viet Natl Army. It must not fall under Huu's control for possible eventual use against Bao Dai.

Letourneau went on to say that he by no means opposed to inclusion of outspoken nationalists in reshuffled Viet Govt. They must not, however, at this time agitate for revision of basic accord with Fr. He, Letourneau, knew perfectly well these accords wld be revised once peace came and he cld at this time easily make official declaration that when peace arrived whole matter of relationship with Fr wld be renegotiated. If he did so now, however, there gravest danger that within few months Fr parents, polits and taxpayers wld refuse allow continuance present mil and fin sacrifices in Indochina.

I told Letourneau that I had urged Bao Dai, whether or not he given additional titles, powers or facilities, to leave his mountain retreat, take up residence in Saigon and Hanoi and actively interest himself in govt and formation natl army. If he did so I sure he wld meet with support and success. Letourneau glad hear he had been given this advice; it necessity of hour. Letourneau said he hoped be able discuss return to Saigon of Empress. He remarked he had once told Bao Dai he cld have Norodom Palace but not until appropriate residence had been built for Fr rep. Bao Dai had not then seemed much interested in this offer except say he wld prefer new residence for himself.

HEATH

751G.11/1-3052: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Legation at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, February 7, 1952—3:41 p. m.

1110. Legtels 1505 Jan 30,[2] 1497 Jan 28.[3] Altho we have had occasion in past to question wisdom of Bao Dai's analysis of IC scene Emperor has, in Dept's opinion, exceeded his own past record in proposals outlined reftels.

Without attempting comment detailed points it is difficult understand how man who has shown as little inclination or ability to exercise already considerable auth for benefit his country and people cld be expected to do better if that auth were enlarged. Therefore assumption he cld and wld successfully carry out functions HICOM and CinC with auth in all three states impossible accept.

If there is any truth in allegation proposal he succeed de Lattre actually emanated from latter, which we doubt, we can only surmise that it was part of plan to increase Bao Dai's titular auth over Viet natl army for morale purposes and gen strategy blast Emperor loose from his aloof lethargy and force more active role upon him.

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[1] Repeated to Paris for information as telegram 4642.

[2] *Ante*, p. 22.

[3] Not printed.

Dept has always recognized desirability pursue latter objective and is still anxious consider any reasonable plan which might further this end. Past disillusionments have, however, led us to suspect that Emperor puts personal above natl considerations. We have concluded, for instance, that reason he has not accepted transfer Norodom Palace is because it wld entail move from Dalat to Saigon with resultant curtailment pleasures and increase workload.

We find proposal that Bao Dai wld lead "effective resistance" against Chi after invasion among most unrealistic suggestions this extraordinary interview. If there were no other reason why suggestion he replace de Lattre as HICOM and CinC is, at least, impracticable anticipated violent reaction of Laotian and Cambodian govts to such a proposal cld be cited, a subj which it is noted was not broached in interview. It is unnecessary refer to reaction of Fr and North Af troops were they asked to serve under his mil leadership.

We continue to recognize present indispensability and potential usefulness Bao Dai despite his faults, but until he has demonstrated will buckle down to job and put existing auth to good use in dealing with immed and pressing problems it is premature encourage enlargement his role, particularly as suggested.

ACHESON

751G.00/2–1152

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 11, 1952.

Problem

To determine what courses of action, political, military and economic, the U.S. may take to accomplish its objectives in Indochina in the event that no distinguishable Chinese aggression eventuates and, correlatively, Chinese technical and matériel assistance to the Viet Minh increases.

Discussion

U.S. Objectives:

To prevent Indochina (as well as Southeast Asia as a whole) from passing into the Communist orbit, to assist the Indochinese people to develop the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and thereby to contribute to the strengthening of the free world. [This objective is embodied in the present NSC study on Southeast Asia; that study also includes the expression "to prevent Chinese Communist aggression, and to meet such aggression should it occur".] [2] The Senior Staff Study, about to be presented to the NSC,[3] is primarily designed to determine the courses of action which the U.S. may take to prevent Chinese Communist aggression in Southeast Asia and to meet such aggression, should it occur. This memorandum is prepared on the assumption that a distinguishable Chinese Communist aggression on Southeast Asia does not occur and that the Kremlin–Peiping strategists have concluded that their best interests are served by a continuance of their present tactics, i.e., increasing technical and matériel assistance to the Viet Minh until the forces of the French Union and the allies believe a continuance of the struggle unprofitable, or hopeless. This memorandum sets forth:

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[1] Drafted by William S. B. Lacy, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.

(*a*) certain general considerations which have been embodied in the Senior Staff Study for the NSC which, nonetheless, bear equally upon the problem with which this memorandum is concerned; and

(*b*) courses of action which the U.S. may take in the event the above assumption proves valid.

General Considerations:

1. Communist domination of all Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short term, and critically endanger in the longer term, United States security interests.

a. Any successful identifiable Chinese Communist aggression in this area, especially if achieved without encountering more than token resistance on the part of the United States or the UN, would have psychological and political consequences which might result in the relatively swift accommodation of the rest of Asia and thereafter of the Middle East to communism. Such a Communist success would tend to nullify the psychological advantages accruing to the free world by reason of its response to the aggression in Korea.

b. Serious consequences would also flow from successful communist subversion of these countries without identifiable aggression.

c. Communist control of all of Southeast Asia would render the U.S. position in the Pacific offshore island chain precarious and would seriously jeopardize fundamental U.S. security interests in the Far East.

d. The loss of Southeast Asia, especially of Malaya and Indonesia, could result in such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to communism.

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[2] Brackets in the source text. The paper under reference, "NSC Staff Study on United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Communist Aggression in Southeast Asia", Feb. 13, 1952, is printed in large part in U.S. Department of Defense, *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967* (The Pentagon Papers), Book 8, pp. 468–476. This paper was circulated as an annex to NSC 124, Feb. 13, the NSC report on the same subject; NSC 124 is included in documentation on general policies of the United States with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII.

[3] Reference is to NSC 124.

e. Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin, and a producer of petroleum and other strategically important commodities. Southeast Asia is a major exporter of rice upon which important areas of free Asia are dependent. Malaya is the principal source of dollar earnings for the United Kingdom.

2. Policies designed to strengthen the political and territorial integrity of the countries of Southeast Asia require sensitive selection and application, on the one hand to assure the optimum of military efficiency through coordination of measures for the general area, and on the other, to accommodate or to do minimum violence to the individual sensibilities of the several governments, social classes and minorities of the area.

3. The successful defense of Tonkin is one of the keys to the retention in non-communist hands of mainland Southeast Asia, with the possible exception of the Malay Peninsula. However, should Burma come under Communist domination, a communist military advance through Thailand would make Indo-China, including Tonkin, militarily indefensible. Thus, the route of communist advance into Southeast Asia will influence the execution of the following U.S. courses of action with respect to individual countries of the area.

4. France, following the Pau Conference (1950),[4] made every political concession to the Associated States which the United States has deemed necessary and desirable, to give effect to the March 8, 1949 Accords[5] and to enable them to develop their own national life. The effectiveness of these concessions has to a certain extent been limited, due to the tardiness with which they were made, the inability of the Associated States to take over, the lack of effective publicity about what had happened, and a lingering suspicion of French integrity.

5. In the long run, the security of Indochina against communism will depend upon the development of native governments able to command the support of the masses of the people and national armed forces capable of relieving the French of the major burden of maintaining internal security. Some progress is being made in the formation and development of national armies. However, the Vietnamese Government has been slow to assume its responsibilities and has con-

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[4] At the Pau Conference, which concluded on Nov. 27, 1950, representatives of France and the Associated States sought to achieve the transfer of substantial economic sovereignty to the latter. For texts of 10 quadripartite agreements reached at the conference and signed on Dec. 16, 1950, see France, Direction de la Documentation, *Notes et Etudes Documentaires*, No. 1425 (January 24, 1951), pp. 1–38.

[5] For information on the Accords, see footnote 5, p. 19.

tinued to suffer from a lack of strong leadership. It has had to contend with: (*a*) lingering Vietnamese suspicion of any French-supported regime, combined with the apathetic and "fence-sitting" attitude of the bulk of the people; (*b*) the difficulty, common to all new and inexperienced governments, of training the necessary personnel and building an efficient administration; and (*c*) the failure of factional and sectional groups to unite in a concerted national effort.

6. The military situation in Indochina continues to be one of stalemate. Increased U.S. aid to the Franco-Vietnamese forces has been one important factor in enabling them to withstand recent communist attacks. However, Chinese aid to the Viet Minh in the form of logistic support, training, and technical advisors is increasing at a comparable rate. The prospect is for a continuation of the present stalemate in the absence of intervention by important forces other than those presently engaged.

7. While it is unlikely under the present circumstances that the French will suffer a military defeat in Indochina, there is a distinct possibility that the French Government will soon conclude that France cannot continue indefinitely to carry the burden of her total military commitments. From the French point of view, the possible means of lessening the present burden include: (1) a settlement with the communists in Indochina; (2) an agreement to internationalize the action in Indochina; (3) reduction of the NATO obligations of France.

8. A settlement based on a military armistice would be more complicated in Indochina than in the case of Korea. Much of Indochina is not firmly under the control of either side, but subject to occasional forays from both. Areas controlled by the opposing sides are interspersed, and lines of contact are fluid. Because of the weakness of the native governments, the dubious attitudes of the population even in areas under French control, and the certainty of continued communist pressure, it is highly probable that any settlement based on a withdrawal of French forces would be tantamount to handing over Indochina to communism. The United States should therefore continue to oppose any negotiated settlement with the Viet Minh.

9. In the event that information and circumstances point to the conclusion that France is no longer prepared to carry the burden in Indochina, or if France presses for a sharing of the responsibility for Indochina, whether in the UN or directly with the U.S. Government, the United States should oppose a French withdrawal and consult with the French and British concerning further measures to be taken to safeguard the area from communist domination. In anticipation of

these possibilities, the United States should urgently re-examine the situation with a view to determining:

a. Whether U.S. participation in an international undertaking would be warranted.
b. The general nature of the contributions which the United States, with other friendly governments, might be prepared to make.

10. General Juin informed General Bradley and Field Marshal Slim on January 11, 1952 that the forces of the French Union and the Associated States could liquidate the Viet Minh in about eighteen months provided that:

a. Chinese assistance to the Viet Minh was not increased significantly beyond its present level;
b. U.S. assistance to French Union forces arrived on schedule; and
c. no massive Chinese intervention materializes.

11. It must be assumed that the Kremlin and Peiping are determined upon the domination of Southeast Asia, sooner or later. Therefore, we must assume that if the enemy fails to dominate Indochina (and/or Burma) through the successful execution of his present tactics, i.e., limited assistance to the Viet Minh, he must ultimately resort to stronger measures, including "distinguishable intervention". The conclusion is inescapable: other things remaining the same, the security of Southeast Asia from Communist encroachment depends, *in the final analysis*, on the military neutralization of China.

Courses of Action

General:

Since present U.S. policy was in fact designed to enable the forces of the French Union and the Associated States to liquidate the Viet Minh on the assumption that "distinguishable Chinese aggression" would not occur, it follows that as long as that assumption is maintained, proper courses of action to be suggested at the present time can differ in no remarkable particular from those courses of action upon which we are already embarked. In short, since the national interest requires it, we must keep on keeping on in Indochina, until the Viet Minh is liquidated and therefore, no longer an effective instrument of the Kremlin and Peiping, or until events elsewhere in the world relieve, in whole or in part, the burden now borne by anti-communist forces in this theater of action.

Particular:

1. The U.S. must continue its present military assistance program to Indochina and must be prepared to increase it in accordance with the request of the Commanding General in the Theater, as approved by MAAG.

2. The U.S. must be prepared to assume an increasing share of the financial burden of the war in Indochina now borne by France. This may be done through:

a. an increase in our military and financial assistance program;
b. the provision of end items now paid for by the French in dollars;
c. an increase in budgetary assistance to Metropolitan France.
As the struggle in Indochina continues the French will find increasingly compelling the choice between the support of the Indochinese operation and the support of French commitments to NATO. Because of the enormous physical difficulties attached to an evacuation of Indochina; because of the parlous effect of such a withdrawal on North Africa;[6] and because of grave consequences on the French political scene of these two considerations, it seems to us likely that the French will choose to continue their Indochina operation at the expense of their NATO commitments. We should bear in mind that a reduction in the Indochina operation is a reduction in the realities of men and matériel in an active theater of war; reduction in NATO commitments are, in fact, paper reductions. This problem is so important and so complex as to require, it seems to us, consideration at the highest possible level.

3. The formation and commitment to battle of the Indochinese National armies should be accelerated in every possible way. *In our opinion, this offers the most promising prospect of influencing the political complex in a positive way, and of providing additional assistance in an effective manner.* In Indochina, as in other oriental countries, political stability as a practical matter, often results from the maintenance of a strong national army. In Indochina the national armies will represent the only attribute of sovereignty and independence which captures the imagination of the indigenous population. Finally, only through the commitment to battle of Indochinese troops can the problem of the shortage of French manpower in Indochina be solved. The formation of the national armies in Indochina has proceeded with reasonable speed, the limiting factors are shortage of cadres to train Indochinese officers and NCO's, and shortage of equipment. Therefore, the U.S. should be prepared:

a. to increase its supply of matériel to the national armies; and
b. enable the French to release training cadres now on duty in Europe for duty in Indochina;
c. to continue to press both French and Indochinese to appoint Indochinese commanders-in-chief of the national armies.
d. to consider assuming all or part of the financial burden now borne by the French necessary to the maintenance and increase of the Indochinese national armies. If an appreciable increase in American involvement in the Indochinese operation is justified, as we believe it to be, it seems clear that, for both political and military reasons, the U.S. should choose the national armies' project as the first area in

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[6] For documentation on French North Africa, see volume XI.

which it is prepared to accept increased direct responsibility. The following estimates of the cost of the national armies' project are supplied to provide you with an idea of the burden it represents to France and, therefore, the magnitude of the responsibility which we might assume:

> Current cost to France of the total military operation in Indochina is roughly U.S.$1,000,000,000 per year. The present national armies portion of that total is approximately U.S.$400 million. Both figures are exclusive of present U.S. matériel assistance at the rate of U.S.$200 million per year.

4. The extent and character of concessions made to Indochinese nationalism must be publicized in Indochina and the rest of Asia to the end that the three Associated States receive support, now lacking, from the indigenous populations of Indochina as well as from the other Asian powers. We are already discussing this project with the Psychological Warfare [*Strategy*] Board.

5. Press Bao Dai to take a more active and vigorous part in Vietnamese affairs. He should be pressed to:

a. Broaden the representations in his Government of Vietnamese political group such as the Cao Daists, Dai Viets, Catholics, etc.;
b. make public a national budget;
c. establish diplomatic missions abroad;
d. devote particular energy to the national armies' project.

We should bear in mind that the measures we have taken in the past twenty-four months to assist the French and the Indochinese to liquidate the Viet Minh have been remarkably successful. Indochina is still in the control of anti-communist forces. This would have been impossible without U.S. assistance. The cost to the U.S. has been relatively small; the alternative to the courses of action we have taken was to admit the loss of Indochina and Southeast Asia to communist control. Since we predicated our course of action two years ago on the assumption of the same problem with which this memorandum is concerned it seems reasonable to assume that the continuation and augmentation of the same course of action as suggested in the foregoing will continue to be successful.

751G.551/2–1152: Telegram

The Chargé at Hanoi (Hubbard) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, February 11, 1952—5 p. m.

547. Rptd info Paris 197, Saigon 348.

1. Had a few words with Salan during official dinner given Letourneau by Huu last night. Salan said he himself was "firm" as

military CINC, but question of HICOM still undecided; nor does he believe Letourneau knows answer yet.

2. After dinner, in replying to Huu address, Letourneau made long ex tempore speech, burden of which was appeal for faith in France, echoing De Lattre worship last April at Vinh-Yen, that he had come not to limit Vietnamese sovereignty, but to defend it. Letourneau said he realized position was very hard for all Vietnamese at present, especially in the delta; but with France behind them and US aid, Communism could and would be defeated.

3. Before dinner, I had brief words with Bishop of Bui-Chu who was very down in the mouth and said if help did not come soon his province would fall to Commies. Asked if US would send troops; I said I was afraid not. Bishop said Bui-Chu itself has not yet been occupied, but VM are everywhere else in area. Shortly after I heard Bishop telling Letourneau much the same thing.

After dinner, I had several words more with Bishop, who said situation was desperate; Commies were winning people over. Bishop said he had come to Hanoi to tell officialdom the truth; referred to Letourneau speech as "nothing but words". Asked if there would be a chance to see Minister Heath during latter's trip to Hanoi today and tomorrow for Sontay ceremony. I said I feared schedule was extremely tight and doubted if it could be done; but I begged he feel free to call on Consulate if able before he left town.

Hubbard

751G.00/2-1252 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, February 12, 1952—8 p. m.

4948. Rptd info Saigon 289, London unnumbered. FonOff official, who has had long talk with Frederic-Dupont, RPF member National Assembly Subcomite National Defense Mission to IC, tells us that members mission in general agreement on their findings and expected to submit lengthy report to National Assembly soon. Informant says mission generally optimistic in its findings and believes IC can be held except in event Chinese aggression. Mission said to have found no sentiment for withdrawal and generally high morale both among Fr and Vietnamese. Mission was particularly impressed with progress made in formation Vietnamese National Army, excellent results obtained by this army in pacification work and satisfactory manner in which Vietnamese units have performed against Vietminh in Tonkin. Chief problems said to be cadres but mission considered Vietnam Army gave hopes for future. Mission said to have been pleased with contacts with US Reps IC and to have made efforts to get in touch with all Fr and Vietnamese groups. Most unsatisfactory part of picture was said to be Tran Van Huu Govt, which was described as being composed of too many "reactionaries" who were uninterested or incapable carrying out any program social and agrarian reform.

FonOff official comments that it is interesting to have unanimous view expressed by group composed of Socialists, RPF, Radical and Independent reps and that reports of mission to National Assembly shld be helpful in meeting some of criticism and opposition govt policy such as that expressed during National Assembly debate in Dec.

BRUCE

601.5151G/2-2452 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 24, 1952—7 p. m.

1670. Rptd info Paris 587, Hanoi unn. At special briefing held evening Feb 22 at High Commissariat for me, Gen Brink[1] and Tobler, acting director STEM, Gen Salan reviewed mil situation and Letourneau summarized over-all situation Assoc States. Salan's comments being transmitted by despatch.[2]

Gist Letourneau's remarks as fol:[3]

Death De Lattre had given rise to uneasiness, particularly among Viets regarding Fr plans and intentions. He had come to Assoc States to answer questions with view to allaying doubt as well as get first-hand knowledge present situation. He found mil situation still worrisome but presently in hand. He thanked US for aid which had helped bring this about.

Vital question was development Viets army regarding which there are two major problems: (1) source of funds and (2) senior and staff officers and specialists. He had told Viets Govt Fr willing initially shoulder major share Viets mil expenses but Viets Govt must rapidly assume increasing share burden. Viets obviously not anxious assume heavier financial responsibility. No difficulty getting sufficient Viets manpower for ranks and company grade officers but dearth qualified senior and staff officers and specialists serious Lacuna. Reluctance Viets have Fr officers provisionally fill post and their obsession with having Viets occupy all positions is major stumbling block. Fr Commander-in-Chief naturally cld not rely upon inexperienced and untried Viets. Gen Salan had expressed willingness give training to promising officers but Viets impatient to have their people in top brackets. On whole, Letourneau optimistic regarding Viets forces, but time of essence as northern Vietnam campaign proved evidence of increasing Chi training and material assistance, including heavier armaments.

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[1] Brigadier General Francis G. Brink, Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group at Saigon.

[2] Despatch 416 from Saigon, Feb. 26, p. 40.

[3] Despatch 429 from Saigon, Mar. 3, not printed, contains a memorandum of conversation supplementing the account contained in this telegram. (751G.00/3-352)

Pacification cannot be accomplished by Fr without energetic cooperation Viets. Especially important, and presently lacking, is strong, efficient Viets admin and police machinery to take control in areas regained from VM and take advantage of population fatigue under VM exactions. This, of course, only one facet larger problem stimulation leadership and vigorousness Viets Govt.

Letourneau referred to strong sentiment in France, particularly in parliamentary circles, which questions policy sacrificing Fr manpower and wealth on country which manifests desire expell Fr. Asserted he told Bao Dai willingness France continue mil effort depends on (1) Viets Govt vigorously shouldering its polit, admin, and fin responsibilities and (2) abandoning present carping attitude of demanding ever more concessions.

Viets Govt shld devote efforts now expended on building up external prestige to improvement internal admin. Letourneau considers Fr Union formula valid and major revision inappropriate, altho minor adjustments might be negotiated discretely. He remarked France's capabilities limited and that when exhausted, France's "friends" wld have to come to rescue otherwise chaos wld ensue. He did not specify type of "rescue" envisioned.

He then made rather surprising statement on which I did not comment. He said even if peace were restored the "presence Francaise" in IC shld still be supported by its friends (US) for if Fr were eliminated results wld be anarchy.

No polit problem in Laos but in Cambodia elections had stimulated rising tide nationalistic tub-thumpings. He had reminded Cambodians that unless more realistic attitude adopted Cambodians inviting Communist takeover.

Comment: Main theme of Letourneau's able presentation was that key to improvement of situation is Viets Govt facing up to its responsibilities. When I enquired in what way US might help in this respect, Letourneau made no specific suggestions but said that High Commissioner wld naturally keep in closest touch with me.

While Letourneau alluded to Fr weariness with Assoc States mil burden he in general reflected determination France stick to guns both with respect to VM and Viets demands for greater freedom. His reference to validity of Fr Union formula wld suggest he will not recommend significant additional concessions to Viets nationalistic aspirations.

HEATH

951.61/2–2552: Telegram

The Chargé in France (Bonsal) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, February 25, 1952—8 p. m.

5181. Rptd info Saigon 295, London unnumbered. This evening's *Paris-Presse* on front page and *Le Monde* on back page carry account

Letourneau press conference Saigon as reported by Associated Press, in which Letourneau quoted by *Paris-Presse* as saying "France wld not refuse to negotiate with Viet Minh but it will not take first step" and by *Le Monde* saying "France wld not refuse to talk with Viet Minh but wld take first step under no circumstances".[1]

FonOff officials in charge Asian affairs are astonished that Letourneau wld make any such statement and point out, as does *Le Monde* in bracketed portion at end its story, that, if Letourneaus statements confirmed, they wld denote marked change in positions set forth by him upon arrival at Saigon that French Govt in event Korean armistice wld be disposed to seize occasion examine possibilities general settlement Far Eastern questions but there was no question negotiating with Ho Chi-minh.

One FonOff official says that Foreign Minister Schuman's statement at Toulouse in January was subject considerable discussion in Council Ministers at that time during which it was made clear that Council Ministers opposed negotiations with Ho Chi-minh. This official also points out that Letourneau, if he made such statement, cld not have chosen worse moment when governmental and financial crises here accompanied by withdrawal from Hoa Binh. He points out that Hoa Binh evacuation may cause difficulties in National Assembly even though it was wise military move and in no sense disastrous defeat like Langson and Caobang. He adds that FonOff impression was that Letourneau was one of stoutest defenders of thesis France must and cld hold in IC and withdrawal out of question. This thesis, he says, is given added support by findings of recent National Assembly mission to IC and he hopes that comprehensive composition of this mission will enable its findings, which were generally optimistic regarding French ability hold in IC, assist in allaying any apprehension in National Assembly re Hoa Binh evacuation. He states that mission members were fully aware reason for original operation take Hoa Binh and that they were also aware that its seizure had not cut supply line from Chinese Communists to Viet Minh, which now maintained by army coolies not dependent on main routes.

FonOff also informs us Ministry Associated States completely in dark re statement attributed to Letourneau and that high-ranking Ministry Associated States official also expresses surprise re statement.

BONSAL

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[1] In despatch 434 from Saigon, Mar. 6, not printed, the Legation transmitted translations of the official press release covering the press conference given by Associated States Minister Letourneau in Saigon on Feb. 25. (751G.00/3–652)

Editorial Note

On February 25, 1952, an American-French Memorandum of Understanding regarding United States financial support for the French effort in Indochina was concluded at Lisbon. The United States undertook to make purchases of military equipment for French use in Indochina in the amount of $200 million, provided France took certain measures to increase its overall military budget. This assistance was designed to enable France to meet its European defense obligations as specified by arrangements reached at the Ninth Session of the North Atlantic Council, Lisbon, February 20–25.

The Memorandum of Understanding and related material is included in documentation on the Ninth Session of the North Atlantic Council and concomitant Foreign Ministers Meetings held in Lisbon, February 20–26, 1952, in volume V. Additional documentation on this agreement is included in the compilation on relations of the United States with France in volume VI.

751G.00/2–2652 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, February 26, 1952—7 : 23 p. m.

5033. Fol text UP despatch Paris Feb 26.

"Fr may have to abandon all northern IC to the Commie Viet Minh rebels this year and withdraw some 250 miles southward.

"Govt officials declined to comment openly on the possibility. But last weekend's retreat by loyal and Fr forces from the strategic Hoa Binh fortress, which the late Marshal Jean de Lattre de Tassigny said he cld hold 'forever', emphasized the gravity of the situation.

"Informed sources said official quarters considered such a move wld represent a major setback for the free world.

"It wld mean a withdrawal to the narrow waist of Annam—some 150 miles wide—where a concentrated last-ditch defense line cld be set up in mountainous terrain."

This example of particularly irresponsible reporting will undoubtedly be inflated by press and result in further misinterpretations at a time when Hoa Binh withdrawal is attracting considerable attn to IC mil scene. Counselor Fr Emb called today concerning it. Ur comments invited.[2]

WEBB

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[1] Repeated to Saigon as telegram 1216.

[2] In telegram 1690 from Saigon, Feb. 29, Minister Heath reported that there was apparently no basis to the report that the French intended to abandon northern Vietnam. He stated that the over-pessimistic character of the despatch was possibly attributable to poor French public relations handling of the Hoa Binh operation. The evacuation followed a series of "super-confident" French High Command communiqués. (751G.00/2–2952)

751G.00/2–2652: Despatch

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET
No. 416

SAIGON, February 26, 1952.

Ref: Legation Telegram No. 1670 of February 23 [*24*], 1952 repeated Paris as 587 and pouched Hanoi.

Subject: Military Briefing by General Salan

At a special briefing held on the evening of February 22nd at the High Commissariat for me, General Francis G. Brink, Chief, MAAG, and Mr. John Tobler, Acting Director, STEM, General Salan, Acting Commander-in-Chief of the French Union Forces in the Associated States, reviewed the military situation in Indochina. Immediately following General Salan's presentation, Minister for the Associated States Letourneau gave an estimate of the overall situation in Indochina. Letourneau's comments were summarized in the Legation's referenced telegram.

The substance of General Salan's briefing is as follows:

The Viet Minh forces sustained very heavy casualties in the Hoa Binh campaign, resulting in an appreciable lowering of fighting spirit. The high casualty rate and profound battle weariness were substantiated by captured Viet Minh documents and by Viet Minh prisoners of war, a larger number than usual, including officers, having been taken in the Hoa Binh operation. The enemy has broken off action with indications that his best elements have been severely mutilated and that Viet Minh manpower is not inexhaustible. General Salan did not specify the number of Viet Minh casualties. He did state, however, that French Union casualties had been in the neighborhood of 5,000 of which 1,800 were killed. Of the wounded about 75% would be able to return to duty after two months. General Salan implied that the French Union losses during the period of the two months fighting were not considered excessively heavy and compared favorably with casualties sustained in last year's battles which lasted three to four days each.

Viet Minh infiltration into the Delta is well in hand. The 320th Viet Minh Division, which had infiltrated northeastward from the southeast corner of the Delta, and had constituted the most serious threat, had been dispersed in the general vicinity of Thai Binh by General De Linares.[1] General de Linares' forces included troops secretly withdrawn from the Hoa Binh area and an attack in force had come as a surprise to the Viet Minh. Remnants of the 320th Viet Minh Division were fleeing to the south and west and French units at river crossings were expected to exact additional toll on the retreating Viet Minh forces. Artillery had accounted for heavy Viet Minh casualties; United States provided "alligators" had proved especially helpful in the Delta operations. There are also Viet Minh units Northeast of

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[1] Major General François Gonzales de Linares, Commander of French Union forces in North Vietnam.

Hanoi but these are being compressed and do not constitute a serious threat.

The Vietnamese battalions showed up well in the North Vietnam battles; there were no defections. All but one of the battalions saw very heavy fighting.

Local populations were advised not to oppose superior Viet Minh strength. According to instructions, they evacuated villages but did not flee and returned to their homes when the area was reoccupied by the French. There was no appreciable accrual of manpower to the Viet Minh as a result of the Delta operations, the French counteraction having forced hasty and surreptitious Viet Minh withdrawals. Small quantities of arms, however, had been taken by the Viet Minh from Vietnamese militia stocks.

Indications are that the Viet Minh had a well formed plan for the North Vietnam action and had excellent capabilities as a result of substantial material aid received from China. For the first time the Viet Minh employed heavy mortars to demolish French Union posts and the evidence points to receipt by the Viet Minh of an increasing supply of heavy weapons.

The Viet Minh used thousands of coolies for pack transport, producing considerable dissatisfaction among those impressed for this work.

The Tonkin operation had been a hard battle but at no time was the situation critical. French Union Forces are presently tired from sustained fighting but morale has been raised in contrast to the fall in Viet Minh morale.

In Southern Vietnam the military situation was good. About 8,000 Viet Minh have come over. There is little activity in Central Vietnam; one Viet Minh attack was successfully repulsed on the Plateau. Laos and Cambodia are quiet. Despite one instance of railway sabotage in the latter state there appears to be no cause for alarm over reported infiltrations of Viet Minh.

Comment: General Salan's presentation was essentially optimistic: the Viet Minh had been beaten back with crippling losses at Hoa Binh and operations to clear the Delta are progressing satisfactorily. As a military leader it is fitting and understandable that the General should demonstrate self-confidence and enthusiasm. It is suggested, therefore, that in appraisal of General Salan's comments note be taken of the report of the U.S. Army Attaché at Saigon (Weeka No. 8, February 23, 1952)[2] which takes a slightly more reserved view of the situation, particularly with respect to the capabilities of the Viet Minh to reconstitute its units and launch further assaults and the difficulties which may be anticipated in operations to clear the Delta. Moreover, while the evacuation of Hoa Binh on the evening of February 22nd (officially announced by the French High Command on February 24)[3] appears to be a militarily sound decision and to have been accomplished, according to French military sources, with eminent success, the withdrawal would nevertheless seem to be susceptible to considerable psychological exploitation by the Viet Minh.

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[2] Not printed.

[3] In despatch 435 from Saigon, Mar. 7, not printed, the Legation transmitted in translation form a précis of the press conference given by General Salan on Feb. 24, announcing the withdrawal from Hoa Binh. (751G.00/3–752)

DONALD R. HEATH

751G.00/2-2852

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Matthews)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 28, 1952.

Subject: Indochina: Recent military and other developments which have added to our concern.

Following the French Union withdrawal from Hoa Binh on February 22 there has been a renewed wave of concern in both official and unofficial circles concerning the seriousness of the present loyalist position in the Associated States. Statements made by responsible French officials, including Mr. Letourneau, have not stemmed the hysterical outpourings of both the US and French press and have led to certain misconceptions which it is important be clarified.

The French engaged in a military offensive against Hoa Binh approximately three months ago in order to seize control of this strategically important town through which traffic on the only road in the area linking Viet Minh forces in the north with those in the south of the delta had to pass. Supplies from Communist China, including Soviet-made vehicles had been moving south in increasing amounts until Hoa Binh was captured. The Franco-Viet forces held their position there under constant fire until February 22 when they put a carefully planned withdrawal operation into effect. During the course of their three-months tenure they eliminated approximately 55% of the Viet Minh attacking force of 40,000 odd, killing an estimated 7,000 and wounding or capturing an estimated 15,000. During the same period they lost 1,588 men of whom 349 were killed in action. The Franco-Viet forces decided to withdraw from Hoa Binh for two excellent reasons: first, because the Viet Minh had succeeded in developing a parallel route bypassing Hoa Binh and secondly, the number of forces pinned down in Hoa Binh jeopardized loyalist control of other more important parts of the Red River delta into which the Viet Minh had already begun to infiltrate. The decision to withdraw was a free and studied one. It was not a forced withdrawal and does not represent a military defeat. It was, in our opinion and that of our observers on the spot, a wise move.

It was nevertheless a withdrawal and has served to bring the nervousness concerning Indochina which has been simmering in all quarters since de Lattre's death to the surface and has resulted in a certain amount of public and private self-indulgence. The importance of the operation has in our opinion been grossly exaggerated by the press in both France and the US. The French press has re-emphasized the hopelessness of France's position in Indochina and the need for internationalization of the problem. The US press has gone so far as to presume that the withdrawal from Hoa Binh portends a withdrawal from all of the north of Indochina. This is an entirely unwarranted conclusion.

In our opinion the justifiable conclusion is that although the overall French military potential has increased steadily Chinese aid to the enemy is abreast. It is now clear that the prospect of any offensive to clear out the Viet Minh in Tonkin as had been optimistically predicted by General de Lattre does not exist. On the other hand, there is no reason to suspect that the Viet Minh is capable of launching a major offensive either. The military stalemate therefore continues as heretofore and the major consideration continues to be what will be the extent and nature of Chinese aid to the Viet Minh, including the possibility of an invasion.

Mr. Letourneau's ill advised press interview of February 24 in which he was reported to have hinted that negotiations with the Viet Minh were a possibility but that the French could not take the initiative has not contributed to calming the hysteria. We expect that Letourneau was guilty of carelessness and that upon his arrival in Paris today he will make a statement that will nullify any impression that the French Government was seeking a way out through negotiation.[1]

In sum, militarily things are just about where they stood a month ago except that we now know that the stalemate is even more apparent than before. It may at least be concluded that if the Chinese are unprepared or unwilling to commit overt aggression at the moment they are at least determined to supply the Viet Minh with sufficient matériel and advice to keep the French Union forces on the defensive.

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[1] In a memorandum of Feb. 29, Allison provided Matthews with the text of a statement released by Letourneau upon his arrival in Paris from Saigon on Feb. 28. The statement read as follows:

"My dominant impression following my trip to Indochina is of the considerable improvement which I have noted in all sectors as a result of the great work inaugurated by Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny.

"I admit that I have been very sorry to note emotion felt in certain quarters, particularly in certain foreign milieux, by the Hoa Binh maneuver. It was accomplished at a time chosen by us, as planned by us and was, in its most minute details, carried out successfully. We have recouped 19 battalions which are now placed in a better position to protect the delta effectively.

"It would be the greatest stupidity to withdraw from Hanoi and Tonkin. We do not intend in any event to leave the delta." (FE files, lot 55 D 282, "1952")

751G.00/2–2852 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, February 28, 1952—1 p. m.
[Received 6:29 p. m.]

5235. Rptd info Saigon 301, London unn. Deptel 5033, Feb 26 (rptd Saigon 1216).

Emb has had no indications from French Govt officials nor has it seen any indications in French press of French intention or expectation abandon Northern IC and withdraw south this year. Dept will have noted Embtels 4948 Feb 12, 5095 Feb 19[1] and 5181 Feb 25, in none of which is there any indication French expectation withdrawal from Tonkin. On contrary, general feeling, reinforced by findings Parliamentary Mission to IC, is that France can hold except in event Chinese aggression. Letourneau, upon arrival here last night, replying to press query re French defense Tonkin, quoted by *Figaro* this morning as saying question does not arise, to leave Hanoi and Tonkin would be stupidity and "we could in no event abandon Delta".

After original flurry, comment on Hoa Binh evacuation now considerably less and so far as Emb knows it has not yet created stir in Natl Assembly. There is natural and inevitable discouragement here following Hoa Binh evacuation in sense that end of IC conflict, hopes for which buoyed up by De Lattre's statement of possible end within 18 months, now seems remote. Letourneau probably contributed to this feeling by his recent statement to press at Saigon that French could not force decision through military offensive. This has not, however, resulted in demands for withdrawal or evacuation Tonkin. In this connection, it must be remembered that French Army IC is professional and only partially metropolitan and the effects of milit reverses do not have immed public impact in France as would be case with civilian conscript army.

FonOff tells us it has had inquiry from French Emb Wash which suggested desirability issuance statement here denying accuracy UP despatch in question. FonOff of opinion that to issue denial would be to magnify story and apparently does not expect to do so.

UP staff correspondent here, queried re story on basis Emb interested in info which at variance with that coming to Emb from Fr sources, stated story written on basis info from source he could not reveal, but that story as sent NY filled with qualifying words and must have been rewritten in NY to give sense different from original.

BRUCE

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[1] Not printed.

751G.00/2-2852: Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Blancké) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, February 28, 1952—5 p. m.
[Received 11:54 p. m.]

597. Rptd info Paris 202, Saigon. Dept pass info DEPTAR G-2, ONI, AFOIN.

I called yesterday on Gov Tam returned from trip to Saigon. He makes flying trip to Paris March 2 as pres of Resistants Committee for Indochina in World War II, to receive bodies of Fr resistants killed by Japanese now being shipped to France for reburial. Gov hopes to be back in Tonkin within week to throw himself into his role in new delta clean up.

1. As before, Tam expressed growing pride in his "Bao-Chinh-Doan" (Garde Nationale) now 14,000 strong. Morale excellent and outfit now fighting well in delta. Tam has installed new system of 100-man mobile groups: Six groups already formed, four more needed. Each group has six machineguns (Needing 8), 40 submachineguns, rest rifles. Mobile groups of picked men are constantly on move, seeking out VM rather than remaining static in posts although bulk of Bao-Chinh-Doan still remaining on overseas post duty). During trip to Saigon Tam argued with reluctant Huu for money to arm and equip the outfit, but had little luck. Has expressed exasperation with sluggish central govt and said he was dipping into his own insufficient regional funds and actually buying transportation and communications equipment from Fr commercial houses to help mobilize his groups. Small trucks were most needed (six-by-six type).

When Bao-Chinh-Doan remained only in posts villagers did not feel protected; but with mobile groups circulating everywhere reassuring impression of ubiquity was being achieved. If groups came on VM in too great strength they simply spotted them and called for help from nearby Bao-Chinh-Doan posts or regular Franc-Viet troops.

As with his civilian collaborators, Tam believes in training up Bao-Chinh-Doan officers fast; and in order to bypass long drawn out regular officer preparation he has installed training school at Binh-Dong near Haiphong. He had in fact visited school day before, to award decorations, and was impressed by morale. Tam said when he found a promising young guardsman he simply sent him to Binh-Dong for three months, and—presto—he had an officer. Thorough strategical grounding was not needed in counter-guerrilla war of delta; what was imperative was to get the men into the fight. And his system was paying off: There had been considerable losses in men and posts but morale and efficiency was improving day by day. Tam repeated proudly that Bao-Chinh-Doan was a family and he was its head. But one must bear in mind it was a police outfit and fought well only as such. The men do not want to be incorporated into national army but prefer to maintain police identity. Two battalions which were incorporated into national forces had in fact given only mediocre performance. Tam added surprisingly that Bao-Chinh-Doan also disliked idea of serving in national army because cadres were European. Not quite knowing how to take this from pro-French Tam, I observed that nonetheless most Viets now seemed to realize that to make a start they must depend on French cadres. Tam agreed warmly and seemed a bit embarrassed at his remark.

Comment: Reluctance of Huu to furnish means for expanding Bao-Chinh-Doan probably owes in no small part to fear, exactly as in case of Nguyen-Huu-Tri before Tam, of private police army in north. Although elsewhere in conversation Tam inveighed against such regional armies as Cao-Dai and Hoa-Hao, maintaining nations armed forces must be one, his pride in his own praetorian guard might indicate some grounds for central govt's reluctance to see it grow stronger.

2. In civilian field Tam said he thought he cld clean out grafters and install an efficient team of province and district chiefs in about five more months. When that goal had been achieved he wld be ready to pass Tonkin to a success [*successor*]. Asked if he had any candidates for this Tam said he had not but hoped it cld be a younger man not afraid of hard work; all that was needed in Tonkin was hard work. Tam prefers to pick his own young men and train them up, from whatever background, but said he was always willing to keep on older men if they were willing to go the pace. Soft-living officials were learning that no one had a vested interest in any job.

3. I asked Tam if he had any news on possible cabinet changes. He said during recent Tonkin visit of Huu and Nhuong they had asked his opinion on that and he had replied he was too busy to think about such things, that was up to them, but he did feel they must have a full-time Minister of Defense. Huu and Nhuong had also asked him to take on a cleanup in south as well as north, but he had refused on grounds further dissipation of his energies wld bring failure in all fields.

BLANCKÉ

751G.00/2–2952: Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 29, 1952—noon.

1689. Rptd info Paris 592, Hanoi unn. The withdrawal from Hoa Binh while not unexpected (see Legtel 1556)[1] brought to humiliating close the over-publicized first Fr attempt move out of their Tonkin beachhead in forces; yet within this defeat there were some positive tactical gains.

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[1] In telegram 1556 from Saigon, Feb. 6, not printed, Minister Heath had reported that in the view of the staff and military attachés of the Legation, it would not be advisable for French forces to remain in Hoa Binh indefinitely. (751G.00/2–652)

The whole operation, altho costly to Fr, enabled them inflict heavy casualties on enemy; retreat was skillfully executed with minimum loss men and matériel; the reconcentration of some 10 to 15 battalions in delta area will strengthen that essential position and permit Fr begin cleaning up VM infiltrations which the Hoa Binh over-extension has made possible in last two months; and VM 320th Division which has deeply penetrated southeast delta is directly threatened.

When this much has been said it must be conceded that a Hoa Binh withdrawal was a reverse, and not least so, in psychological and political fields. Perhaps latter will be felt more keenly in France and outside world than in Vietnam where those who have had some clue to recent operations are now rather relieved that Hoa Binh salient has been successfully withdrawn. Fr command now has to answer, before public opinion and Fr Assembly, for inflated propaganda claims for this so-called "offensive."

De Lattre undertook this operation despite some misgivings in high command chiefly in order produce "victory" on eve of Fr budget conferences and to impress the Vietnamese Fr and Amer people with his ability to resume initiative. He hoped trap some VM in Cho Ben and Hoa Binh but his blow fell in air. It was planned to cut VM L of C between north and center but Commies made effective use of coolies on another road farther to west.

With death De Lattre the Hoa Binh operation acquired special sanctity as his legacy. The Fr press began refer to RG 6 as "la voie sacree." Salan himself altho careful to establish that De Lattre was responsible for operation declared he was in Hoa Binh and had no intention getting out. These pronouncements made it peculiarly difficult for Fr to announce their retreat. The press conf of Feb 24 in which Gen Salan attempted to do so made a bad impression, his three quarter hour long explanation of motives, promises of future victories, and confused claims of casualties inflicted had an effect on listeners opposite that intended and did not advance commander in chief's own prestige. He claimed 20,000 casualties for VM but only a week ago he stipulated 45,000. He had put three VM divisions out of action but yet claimed new VM attacks were imminent.

Not the least of propaganda blunders was bringing on Bao Dai to make his first visit to a Franco-Viet front at Hoa Binh in country of Muongs, minority tribe under special protection of crown. The Muongs asked him whether this was "the last or only next-to-last time Fr wld liberate Hoa Binh." Bao Dai told me he had lost face. Bao Dai observed, however, withdrawal was mil necessity.

Altho Viet Govt circles seem generally calm about Hoa Binh natl and opposition groups display deep pessimism. For example, Colonel Le Van Vien, head of Binh Xuyen, sought out Bao Dai to broach a plan for taking to the brush to form the nucleus of a new resistance. "Nationalists" who have been ever ready to see signs of Fr weakening and readiness to parley have had their fears restimulated. The VM has not ceased to trumpet "the most beautiful victory since resistance began."

In sum, while Hoa Binh was by no means a disaster and may even be turned to good account, it is not a bright milestone of two years of mil and polit effort. Taken with the bankruptcy of the economy and lack decisive effectiveness to date of Huu Govt, it may encourage Fr pessimists in their effort to force re-examination whole Fr commitment in IC.

HEATH

751G.00/3–152: Despatch

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 1, 1952.

No. 427

Ref: Legtel 1681, February 27, 1952.[1]

Subject: Interview With General Director of the Bank of Indochina.

Mr. Jean E. P. Laurent* came to see me on his own initiative February 26 at the end of his recent Indochina inspection tour. He was planning to leave Saigon February 27 to visit the Bank's Tokyo branch and then to proceed either on to San Francisco and New York, in both of which cities the Bank has branches, or back to Paris through Saigon. The substance of his remarks regarding Indochinese trade arrangements with Metropolitan France and with Japan respectively have been transmitted in my reference telegram.

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[1] Telegram 1681 from Saigon, Feb. 27, not printed, also reported on Heath's conversation with Laurent. (451G.943/2–2752)

**Annuaire Desfosses* gives the following business connections for Mr. Laurent:

Director General and
Member of Board of Directors: The Bank of Indochina,
Vice President: Banque Franco-Chinoise,
Member of Board of Directors:
  Societe d'Oxygene et d'Acetylene d'Extreme-Orient,
  Salines de Djibouti, de Stax, et de Madagascar (which owns the Saline de Cana in Center Vietnam).
  Les Caoutchoucs de Phuoc-Hoa,
  Societe Francaise d'Entreprises de Dragages at de Travaux Publics,
  Societe Indochinoise de Plantations d' Heveas,
  Caoutchoucs de Kompong-Thom,
  Caoutchoucs de l'Indochine,
  Distilleries de l'Indochine,
  Societe Financiere pour La France et les Pays d'Outre-Mer (which in turn controls several important Indochinese enterprises),
  Societe Indochinoise des Plantations Reunis de Mimot. [Footnote in the source text.]

We were generally impressed with Laurent's decisiveness, wide interests, and general knowledge of Indochinese conditions. That he is able to take positions which might be considered unorthodox for a metropolitan French businessman is indicated by his comments upon the possibility of reconciling French Union and Indochina–Japan trade developments, as already reported in reference telegram.

General Situation in Indochina

He stated that in his opinion the situation was certainly better than it had been after the Cao-Bang disaster in the fall of 1950. At least this was true from a military point of view. He was not so sure that it was true from a political or public administration point of view.

a) The Huu Cabinet was almost entirely made up of Cochinchinese. This was bad because it meant that Bao Dai had not been able to utilize the services of men from Tonkin. The Tonkinese had always proved, of all the Indochinese groups, to be the best politicians or men of politics, he did not know which phrase to use. They might be stubborn, arrogant, too suspicious and in general hard to work with, but they were able—much more able than the easier going Cochinchinese.

b) Bao Dai had proved useful and would be much more useful if he could be stimulated to exert more energy, but Laurent was not sure the latter was possible.

c) The Vietnamese Government was lamentably weak in day to day administration. Laurent placed most of the blame for this on the real paucity of trained personnel. He did not in this respect explain why Ho Chi Minh's government seemed to have able administrators, but merely cited that out of scores of subordinate Annamite personnel which his Bank had at one time or another employed, the Bank had been able to pick only a few for responsible positions: the present Prime Minister Tran-Van-Huu as head of the Credit Fonciere in Cantho and Nguyen De as Assistant Director of the Bank's Hanoi Branch. His general recommendation was that French Counselors with real power should be placed in the various Ministries. These should not be old-time colonial administrators, but untainted Metropolitan-trained technicians. This would mean a complete changeover from the still lingering vestiges of direct administration to the exerting of pressure through advisors with the High Commissariat becoming merely a diplomatic mission. In this respect the Legation notes that Laurent and Economic Counselor Janot are thinking along very much the same lines.

World Situation

Laurent was plainly worried about the capabilities of the Nationalist Chinese Armies in Formosa although he did not explain his preoccupation with this problem. He felt that the Generalissimo still had too many of his old-time grafting generals around him and feared that under such leadership an effective, professional and patriotic fighting force could not be expected. He was also worried about Japan where he felt a potentially "dangerous" situation might develop after the occupation was terminated. Russia, he was convinced, would try to establish close trade relations with Japan in the first instance by buying consumer and some light industrial goods for resale to China. It might even be willing to pay for these in gold. The reason for such a manoeuver would be to permit Russia to provide China for propaganda purposes with goods which it was not presently in a position to spare. In the Legation's opinion this line of reasoning seems rather specious and is reported merely because it may fit in with other information available to Washington. Possibly Laurent was influenced by the fact that, according to him, Russia recently placed an order totalling one billion francs for Lyons silks. These had been clogging Lyons manufacturers' shelves for a long time because they were of such an expensive quality that they could not be disposed of even in the American market.

Bank of Indochina Operations

In answer to a direct question Laurent flatly declared that his Bank had not sold out any of its Indochinese holdings except a little under half the shares of the Societe Indochinoise des Plantations d'Heveas to Lazard Freres, which he described as "half-American". The Bank's reported decrease in Indochinese holdings during 1950 of from one seventh to one eighth of its total assets was entirely due to the fall in the value of the holdings on the Paris Bourse during that year. On the other hand the Bank in 1945, when it foresaw the trend of rising nationalism throughout the Far East, had decided to invest no new funds in that area and had since then concentrated its expansion in the Near East and Africa.

United States and Japanese Investment in Indochina

Ever since the war the Bank had tried to interest American capital in investing in Indochina, but without success. He had tried to promote, for instance, a merger of the Charbonnages du Dong-Trieu (Tonkin) and the Societe Francaise des Charbonnages du Tonkin, in both of which his Bank was an important stockholder, backed with American capital. He was convinced that these properties with American capital, equipment, and technical management could become one of the Far East's most important mining centers. So far, unfortunately, he had been unsuccessful in selling his scheme. The Bank itself had not amalgamated the two companies for fear of being accused of monopolistic practices. He would be equally happy to see Japan invest capital in Indochina and heartily approved of discussions now under way to activate the Lake Nga salt properties with Japanese capital. These properties are owned by the Compagnie des Salins du Midi et des Salines du Djibouti in which the Bank has an active interest.

On the other hand Laurent was not particularly interested in seeing Americans simply enter the Indochinese market as sales agents for manufactured American products. In this respect, as in others Laurent was refreshingly frank in his approach. He was, for instance, similarly so when he suggested that the best way to approach the Indochina-Japan trade problem would be by direct discussions between competent French and American officials, as well as when he said that France would naturally wish to keep Indochina markets in large part for its own imports "as a sort of counter payment for the large sums we are expending in defending it". Just as Laurent and Janot agree on a possible new form which the French "presence" should take in Indochina, so Laurent agrees in substance with what Jean Bourgoin, then Planning Counselor, had to say on American investment vs American imports in Indochina. (See the Legation's despatch No. 544, March 7, 1951, page 20.)[2]

Inflationary Pressures

As was to be expected Laurent felt that the old system, under which the Bank of Indochina was the currency issuing authority, was better than the new quadripartite one of the Institute of Issue insofar as guiding Indochina's financial policy was concerned. Strangely enough, however, he was not particularly worried about the inflationary dangers of continued use of the printing press to cover Vietnam's budgetary deficit. He believed that, should inflationary pressures resulting therefrom become too great, all the French had to do was to relax their piaster-franc transfer controls. Everyone with free piaster funds would be only too happy to convert them into francs. This would mean exporting inflation to Metropolitan France, but could be justified by the fact that in relation to the total economy of France it would have relatively little effect, whereas cumulated inflationary pressures in Indochina might cause a complete disruption of the economy.

Comment: What conclusions can be drawn from Laurent's statements?

1. Perhaps the most important is that, even if his Bank for purely self-interested reasons would like to see the development of Indochina-Japan trade (and its Deputy Director Gannay has spent the last several months presumably setting up the Bank's Tokyo branch in anticipation thereof), its support might be useful in persuading the French authorities to permit such development at least under controlled conditions.

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[2] Not printed.

2. The Bank has not so far so lost faith in the future of Indochina as to reduce its holdings in the Associated States.

3. The Bank is distinctly worried about Japan's ability to keep out of the Sino-Russian orbit. It will be interesting to watch whether, instead of Gannay's being in Tokyo to prepare for increased business, he has actually been there to determine how best the Bank can liquidate its Japanese interests. As indicated above, the Legation has been led to believe the former by statements of both Laurent and of the Director of the Bank's Saigon Branch, Mr. De Champeau. For this reason, if the reverse were the case, it would be all the more important.

4. As in the case with Vinh, Vietnam's Finance Minister (Legation despatch no. 414, February 25, 1952)[3] and with Letourneau, France's Minister for Relations with the Associated States (Legation telegram No. 1670, February 23, 1952),[3] Laurent complained of bad administration as being one of the cardinal weaknesses of the Government of Vietnam. Like Vinh and Letourneau, Laurent also offered no feasible solution as to how Bao Dai's government can get out of the cul-de-sac which faces it. This cul-de-sac or vicious circle seems made up of the following elements:

a. A weak and unrespected administration is hampering not only the civil functioning of government, but also the military effort.

b. This administration could be improved if more dedicated and better qualified persons could be induced to help run it.

c. Such persons are claimed to be available, possibly from the North as Laurent has suggested, but so far have always been judged as not willing to compromise themselves by accepting Government responsibilities as long as the Government they would be thus supporting appears to them to be too pro-French.

d. It is, though still not proved, possible that no matter how great a degree of independence were promised Vietnam, these nationalist leaders would still be unwilling to offer their services to the Bao Dai Government. They might, however, be induced to do so if the French could be persuaded definitely to pledge its good faith that France would give Vietnam an opportunity after peace to renegotiate the basic Accords and presently to give other evidences of France's willingness eventually to relax its hold on the country's economy and to modify its basic mystique, the maintenance of the French "presence" in Vietnam.

e. France has clearly stated to Bao Dai, on the other hand, that it will not consider renegotiating the Accords except upon minor points and then only if such negotiations are not conducted in public. France through Letourneau has also just told the United States that it hopes the United States will support the continued, discreet "presence" of France in Indochina even after peace.

f. Nor has the United States itself yet adopted the position of urging the French to make any evolutionary statement or of taking other similar liberalizing actions suggested in the Legation's telegram No. 1347 of January 7.[3] It is presumably believed that subsequent French public reaction might force the French Government to withdraw from Indochina. In other words, French public opinion in this respect is more to be feared in its results (possible withdrawal of French troops from Indochina) than Vietnamese nationalist public opinion (probable continued inability to create a strong and effective Vietnamese government).

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[3] Not printed.

If this reasoning is correct, it brings the analysis of the problem back to where it started. Laurent's only suggestion for breaking this vicious circle was the apparently impracticable one of placing qualified Metropolitan trained and indoctrinated experts into the various Vietnamese ministries as "advisors" with the mission of actually running the country. This seems to be inconsonant with realities. It could only be accomplished, one would believe, if France were prepared to take over again as an occupying power and if the United States were prepared to back France in this endeavor.

Action: It is suggested that a copy of this despatch be sent to the American Embassy in Paris and to the Office of the United States Political Adviser to the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers, Tokyo.

DONALD R. HEATH

INR–NIE files

National Intelligence Estimate [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, 3 March 1952.

NIE 35/1

PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA THROUGH MID-1952 [2]

THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable developments in Indochina through mid-1952 with particular emphasis on probable Chinese Communist courses of action in that area.

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[1] National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) were high-level interdepartmental reports presenting authoritative appraisals of vital foreign policy problems. NIEs were drafted by officers from those agencies represented on the Intelligence Advisory Committee (IAC), discussed and revised by interdepartmental working groups coordinated by the Office of National Estimates of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), approved by the IAC, and circulated under the aegis of the CIA to the President, appropriate officers of cabinet level, and the National Security Council. The Department of State provided all political and some economic sections of NIEs.

[2] According to a note on the cover sheet, "The intelligence organizations of the Department of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 29 February 1952. See, however, footnotes to paragraphs 4 and 28."

CONCLUSIONS

1. We believe that the French will continue their war effort in Indochina during the period of this estimate. However, while insisting upon the protection of French interests, the French will attempt to limit their commitments in Indochina by demanding additional US financial assistance and by seeking commitments for US–UK military support in the defense of Indochina.

2. The present critical financial situation of France is causing the French Government increasing concern over France's ability to maintain its position in Indochina and to support simultaneously its presently projected military effort in Europe. We believe that the reflections of this concern will give rise to misgivings in Vietnam regarding France's intentions toward Indochina and accordingly will have an adverse effect upon Vietnamese morale. We believe that this concern will not affect the French effort in Indochina during the period of this estimate, but may at a later date adversely influence France's will to continue resistance in Indochina.

3. Independent of operations in Korea, the Chinese Communists have the capability to commit and logistically support approximately 150,000 troops in Indochina. This force could probably cause the present Franco-Vietnamese forces to evacuate Tonkin before effective assistance could be made available to them.

4. We believe, however, that the Chinese Communists will not intervene in force in Indochina during the period of this estimate.*

5. We believe that the Chinese Communists will gradually expand the scale and nature of their present assistance to the Viet Minh and may in addition introduce Chinese Communist "volunteer" troops in small numbers. We believe that in pursuit of this policy they will stop short of any degree of assistance which they estimate might provoke major Western counteraction against the mainland of China.

6. Through mid-1952, the probable outlook in Indochina is one of gradual deterioration of the Franco-Vietnamese military position. We believe that the Viet Minh will make some territorial gains, but will not score a decisive victory during the period of this estimate.

7. The longer term outlook is for continued improvement in the combat effectiveness of the Viet Minh and an increased Viet Minh pressure against the Franco-Vietnamese defenses. Unless present trends are reversed, this growing pressure, coupled with the difficulties

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*It is the view of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–2, Intelligence, Department of the Army, that this sentence should read as follows: "Although the increased Chinese Communist capabilities in South China suggest preparations for an invasion of Indochina, present evidence does not necessarily indicate that such an invasion is imminent; i.e., within the period of this estimate." [Footnote in the source text.]

which France may continue to face in supporting major military efforts in both Europe and Indochina, may lead to an eventual French withdrawal from Indochina.

DISCUSSION

The Current Situation

8. Since the publication of NIE–35: "Probable Developments in Indochina During the Remainder of 1951" dated 7 August 1951,[3] the French extended their Red River delta perimeter around Hanoi and Haiphong westward to Hao Binh, but heavy Viet Minh attacks over a period of two months coupled with harassing action by Viet Minh units which had infiltrated the Delta, have resulted in French withdrawal from the Hoa Binh sector. (See Map No. 1.)[4] In the Hanoi–Haiphong delta area, 115,000 Franco-Vietnamese regular troops currently confront an estimated 90,000 Viet Minh regular troops. Elsewhere in Indochina, guerrilla-type warfare continues and the Viet Minh still control northern Tonkin, major portions of the Annam coast and parts of Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Laos. (See Map No. 2.)[4]

9. There has been a great improvement in the vigor, coordination, and effectiveness of recent Viet Minh attacks along the French perimeter in Tonkin. The Viet Minh have mounted a sustained frontal attack in the western delta area, and elsewhere in the delta have infiltrated one division and major elements of another behind the Franco-Vietnamese positions in the central and southern parts of the delta where they are now conducting harassing operations and pose a threat to the Hanoi–Haiphong line of communications. There has been a noticeable increase in Viet Minh anti-aircraft capability in recent months. Although the Viet Minh have suffered heavy casualties, they continue to attack and have forced the French to commit almost all of their Tonkin reserves to the operations along the western edge of the delta and against Viet Minh units which have infiltrated elsewhere.

10. This increased capability reflects a considerable increase in Chinese Communist advisory, training, and logistic assistance to the Viet Minh. While there is no conclusive evidence that Chinese personnel, either in units or as individuals, are serving with Viet Minh combat units, there are an estimated 15,000 Communist Chinese with the Viet Minh serving in technical, advisory, and garrison capacities. There has been a continuing improvement of transportation routes and facilities from South China into Indochina. Chinese Communist logistic assistance to the Viet Minh via these routes is at an all time

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[3] For text, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 469.

[4] Not printed.

high, while stockpiles on both sides of the border are believed to be in excess of Viet Minh requirements for present operations.

11. Although French losses have been heavy, the combat effectiveness of the French forces remains high. The combat effectiveness of the Associated States' forces is for the most part not yet adequate to fit them for independent combat operations. These forces are primarily performing static defense roles, but some units have conducted themselves creditably with the French in offensive operations. US MDAP aid has been of critical importance to the regular French forces during recent operations. Although the attrition rate in French equipment is high, MDAP logistic assistance is compensating for these losses.

12. There has been little significant change in the political situation within Vietnam, the most important of the Associated States, since the publication of NIE–35, and the factors discussed in NIE–35 which limit the development of a strong Vietnamese government still apply. The death of General de Lattre has had an adverse effect upon Vietnamese morale as have the suspicions of the Vietnamese that the French may be weakening in their determination and ability to defend Indochina.

13. We believe that the spirits of the Viet Minh leaders have been raised by the recent death of General de Lattre, the expanded scale of Chinese Communist assistance, the debilitating effect which the sustained Viet Minh offensive has had upon the French, the reoccupation of Hoa Binh by the Viet Minh and their discernment of a weakening Franco-Vietnamese will to resist. The consolidation of Communist control within the Viet Minh area continues and has effectively countered internal opposition. The food shortage is being alleviated by rice gained from within the French perimeter. There is no evidence of serious friction between the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists.

Viet Minh And Franco-Vietnamese Capabilities And Probable Courses Of Action

14. We believe that the Viet Minh will probably be able to continue to infiltrate the French lines in Tonkin, but will be unable to achieve a decisive victory during the period of this estimate. However, the over-all combat effectiveness of the Viet Minh will almost certainly continue to improve and the Viet Minh will probably be able to launch a series of harassing attacks on French positions in Tonkin. Elsewhere in Indochina, the Viet Minh will increase their terrorist and guerrilla tactics.

15. The French Government is increasingly concerned over France's ability to maintain its position in Indochina. There is a growing official feeling in France that it cannot simultaneously support pres-

ently projected military efforts in both Europe and Asia without greater US aid. The French now estimate that, with present US aid, the maximum 1952 military budget that is politically and economically possible will fall several hundred million dollars short of their projected requirements for NATO and Indochina together. The French, if forced to choose between Europe and Indochina, would view their Indochina commitment as of lesser importance, but the necessity for such a decision is unlikely to arise during the period under review. Moreover, there has been a growing feeling that the distant and costly Indochinese war offers few rewards even if won. This feeling is increasing political pressure for some alleviation of the French burden in Indochina. The various approaches by which France is seeking to achieve such alleviation of the burden are: (*a*) by insisting that much of the financial burden for the defense of Indochina be shifted to the US; (*b*) by seeking a US–UK commitment to participate in the defense of Indochina in the event of more active Chinese Communist intervention; or possibly (*c*) by including the issue of Indochina within the context of any general Far East settlement which might arise out of Korean negotiations. Should these approaches prove unsuccessful, the French would seriously consider withdrawal from Indochina.

16. Within the period under review, however, we believe that a French military withdrawal from Indochina is unlikely despite the increasingly difficult financial situation which has caused isolated demands in Parliament for a withdrawal. Strong factors still hold the French to their present commitments. These include: (*a*) the intangible but powerful factor of prestige; (*b*) the knowledge that withdrawal from Indochina would have repercussions elsewhere in the French Union; (*c*) the concern over the fate of French nationals and investments in Indochina; and (*d*) the official feeling that no settlement with the Viet Minh or with Communist China could be achieved that would preserve any French interests in Indochina.

17. Within Indochina, we believe that there will be no improvement during the period of this estimate in the morale or the political strength of the Vietnamese. The efforts of the French and the Bao Dai regime to resist Communist pressure will continue to be viewed apathetically by a people who do not recognize much of a personal stake in the war effort and apparently mistrust French motives more than they recognize any danger from the Communists. This mistrust of French motives would be further heightened in the event that the French should be impelled to take military measures to subdue growing "third force" movements which are opposed to both the Viet Minh and the French.

Chinese Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action

18. The Communist Bloc continues to view Indochina as a key to its desired goal, that of eventual Communist control over all Southeast Asia. The immediate importance of Indochina to Moscow and Peiping lies in the fact that the existence of a Communist-sponsored Viet Minh compels France to divert much of its financial and military resources to Indochina, prevents the Associated States from gaining generally recognized international status, and hinders the establishment of a stable non-Communist state on China's border. The potential importance of Indochina to Moscow and Peiping is great: the fall of Indochina would be a psychological victory of the first magnitude for the Communist Bloc, would undermine the determination of the governments and peoples of Burma and Thailand to resist Communist aggression, would facilitate further Communist conquests in Southeast Asia, would hinder the "encirclement" of Communist China by non-Communist states, would provide the Communist Bloc with control of additional sources of food and strategic materials, and would deny to the West the strategic position and the resources of Indochina.

19. Transportation facilities from South China into Indochina continue to be improved, and there have been numerous indications of Chinese Communist troop buildup and stockpiling along the Indochina border. These developments increase the capabilities of the Chinese Communists either to invade Indochina in force or to give military assistance to the Viet Minh.

20. If the Chinese Communists should decide to intervene directly in Indochina, they have an estimated 300,000 troops available in South China for such an invasion. We believe that of this number they could actually commit and support logistically 150,000 troops independent of operations in Korea. Logistic and transportation difficulties would restrict the operations of these troops to a series of limited offensives, between which time would be needed for replenishment of supplies and repair of transportation facilities. An intensification of the Korean hostilities would probably substantially reduce the flow of supplies for Indochina unless the Soviets undertook to replenish the Chinese Communist stocks. Such Soviet aid would be probable in the event of Chinese Communist commitment of forces in Indochina. It may be assumed that the infantry components of the Chinese Communist troops south of the Yangtze are adequately equipped with normal infantry light weapons and that their training is sufficient to attempt an invasion. An armistice in Korea would increase the number of Chinese Communist troops and the logistic support that could be made available for operations in Indochina; transportation deficiencies would still be a limiting factor, however, although the level of logistic

support could be raised somewhat by use of the facilities of the Chinese Communist Air Force.

21. These Chinese Communist troops, added to those of the Viet Minh, would probably be able to force the French and the Vietnamese troops to evacuate Tonkin before any effective assistance could be brought to bear. The Chinese Communists are unlikely to commit jet aircraft to Indochina, so long as hostilities in Korea continue. However, the CCAF, employing only piston-type aircraft, would probably, with surpise, have the capability to neutralize the French Air Forces in Tonkin. An armistice in Korea would of course vastly increase this capability.

22. The Chinese Communists might risk an invasion of Indochina in any one of a number of circumstances: in order to counter an anticipated blow by the West and/or the Chinese Nationalists; as a diversionary attack in the event of a general Far Eastern or global war; if the Communists believed that the West intended to attack Communist China regardless of the latter's policies in Southeast Asia; or in the event that Communist leadership should decide that a potential shift in western policies might create a serious threat to Communist China that could not be countered through present Communist strategy.

23. We believe, however, that the Chinese Communists will not invade Indochina during the period of this estimate.† Although the increased Chinese Communist capabilities in South China suggest preparations for an invasion of Indochina, present evidence does not necessarily indicate that such an invasion is imminent. Other considerations, furthermore, militate against a direct intervention by the Chinese Communists:

a. Present Communist strategy is bringing considerable success in Indochina, may weaken the determination and ability of both the Vietnamese and the French to continue resistance, and may provide the Communists with a potential tool for aggravating differences among the Western Powers.

b. Recent western moves have probably made world Communist leadership aware that the West, and in particular the US, may expand the war in Asia to the Chinese mainland should Communist China invade Indochina. Any such awareness is probably somewhat offset by Communist recognition of divided opinions in the West as to the merits and timing of such retaliation. On balance, however, concern that the war in Asia might be expanded and that drastic retaliatory action might be taken against the mainland of China is probably sufficient to be a major factor dissuading the Chinese Communists from openly intervening in force in Indochina.

c. Despite the importance of Indochina discussed above, it is unlikely that its present economic and strategic importance to Peiping and Moscow is great enough to dictate a large-scale Chinese Communist invasion with a possible risk of initiating general war.

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† The Assistant Chief of Staff, G–2, Intelligence, Department of the Army, prefers that this first sentence be deleted. See footnote to paragraph 4 on page 1. [Footnote in the source text.]

24. We believe that the Chinese Communists will, short of open intervention, gradually expand the scale and nature of their present assistance to the Viet Minh. Even assuming continuing heavy commitments in Korea, the Chinese Communists will face no forbidding difficulty in increasing the present level of technical and logistic assistance to the Viet Minh. Logistical support will probably consist primarily of such items as light arms and ammunition, vehicles, some field and anti-aircraft artillery, and communication and medical equipment.

25. The Chinese Communists will also continue to commit technical and advisory personnel to the Viet Minh and may introduce Chinese "volunteer" troops. We do not believe, however, that the Communists, during the period of this estimate, will commit "volunteers" in numbers that would assure a decisive military victory for the Viet Minh or that they believe would result in major Western counteraction against mainland China.

26. Consequently, through mid-1952 the probable outlook in Indochina is one of gradual deterioration of the Franco-Vietnamese military position. We believe that the Viet Minh will make some territorial gains, but will not score a decisive victory during the period of this estimate.

27. The longer term outlook is for continued improvement in the combat effectiveness of the Viet Minh and an increased Viet Minh pressure against the Franco-Vietnamese defenses. Unless present trends are reversed, this growing pressure, coupled with the difficulties which France may continue to face in supporting major military efforts in both Europe and Indochina, may lead to an eventual French withdrawal from Indochina.

751G.00/3–552 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, March 5, 1952—1 p. m.

5341. Rptd info Saigon 305, London unn. Tezenas du Montcel, Dir Gen Min Assoc States, who accompanied Letourneau on recent trip IC, gives us fol appraisal IC situation which he says represents also views Letourneau:

1. They returned Paris with very optimistic view situation. They were impressed by progress made in formation IC natl armies, achievements Vietnamese and other Assoc States Govts and prospects in both mil and pol fields for Assoc States. Pacification in Cochin China described as being in final stage. They are strongly opposed to any thought of Fr withdrawal and are confident that IC can be held except in event Chi aggression.

2. He speaks of changed attitude on part Vietnamese, who are increasingly taking over governmental functions transferred to them and who particularly on lower echelons, both pol and mil, are showing praiseworthy cooperation with Fr auths. He says Vietnamese have been given no food for thought by attitudes shown in Fr Natl Assembly and that Vietnamese are aware of increasing sentiment in France for finding some means by which France can find solution to heavy IC burden. Letourneau emphasized this point to Vietnamese and pointed out that Fr Natl Assembly wld not indefinitely continue provide support for Fr effort IC and Vietnamese themselves must cease their "small wars" against Fr and concentrate on their real war against Viet Minh.

Letourneau and Tezenas du Montcel consider that real IC problem is not at Saigon but at Paris. Optimistic estimate of situation gained by recent parl mission headed by Socialist expected to be of assistance in supporting continued effort IC.

3. Letourneau and Tezenas du Montcel completely astonished by reaction to former's statement in press conf at Saigon re possible negots with Ho Chi-Minh. Letourneau had answered inquiry from Amer correspondent re what Fr wld do if Ho Chi-Minh offered to negotiate. He had replied in only way possible that Fr cld obviously not reject out of hand any chance for peace but that Bao Dai Govt as only legal and recognized govt Vietnam wld have to establish conditions and wld have to decide whether it was willing negotiate. This was not intended as any overture to Viet Minh.

FonOff official savs that Tezenas du Montcel has talked at length with Parodi[1] and Roux, Act Dir Asian Affairs, and confirms this gen appraisal given Emb Off by Tezenas du Montcel. This official adds that Letourneau and Tezenas du Montcel speak of seeing end in sight in IC, that end over at two or three-year period based upon part to be played by IC natl armies, upon pol prospects Assoc States Govts and essential contribution made by US mil aid. This is optimistic appraisal IC situation assumes continuation Fr efforts IC and does not represent an appraisal of what Fr policy decisions may be taken by Counc Mins and Natl Assembly in light pol and fin situation here. This is indicated by Tezenas du Montcel statement that real IC problem is not at Saigon but at Paris.

BRUCE

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[1] Alexandre Parodi, Secretary General of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Editorial Note

At its 113th Meeting, March 5, 1952, the National Security Council considered the situation in Southeast Asia. The memorandum of discussion at that meeting read in part as follows:

"Secretary Acheson also emphasized his belief that any paper on Southeast Asia should stress the contingency of a continued deterioration of the situation in Indochina in the absence of any identifiable Communist aggression, and should also take careful account of the possibility that the French might feel compelled to get out of French

Indochina. He said that he had discussed this matter at considerable length in Lisbon, and had come to the tentative conclusion that what the French really mean when they stress their difficulties is that they cannot continue to carry their burden both in NATO and in Indochina without additional help from the United States. The French, he said, were also seriously concerned about the ultimate effects of their losses in Indochina on the whole French military manpower reserves. Accordingly, Secretary Acheson suggested that the Senior NSC Staff be asked to undertake a thoroughgoing study of the priority which should be accorded Indochina as compared, for instance, to NATO, and what the United States is really prepared to do in order to keep the French in Indochina." (Truman Library, Truman papers, PSF–Subject file)

A report on the portion of the NSC Meeting devoted to Southeast Asia is included in documentation on the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII. See also footnote 5, page 80.

751G.551/3–652 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, March 6, 1952—8 p. m.

[Received 11:53 a. m.]

1740. Rptd info Paris unn, Hanoi unn. Gen Salan called on me yesterday and asserted with every appearance of sincerity that for immed future he felt entirely reassured as regards Fr Union milit position against VM. He had certain intuition about VM operations developed by long experience in fighting them and thru personal contacts before Ho Chi Minh rebellion in 1946. His intuition told him VM milit morale had dropped. But quite apart from intuition he had unusual documentary proof of this decline in VM morale and that mauling suffered by VM div in Hoa Binh operations wld not permit them in near future resume offensive operations on any important scale. His forces wld therefore be able at last really to clean out Delta, something that had never been thoroughly done before. Tam as Govt of Tonkin, was doing good, if not ideal, job establishing authority in Delta and weeding out VM agents. The militarized police or natl guard which Tam was organizing was good and necessary idea although it wld take some time before really competent organization cld be developed. Tam, who possessed personal qualities of energy and courage, was having difficulty in forming really energetic, loyal team. With practical completion of Northern defense works and prospects of early clearing of Delta of VM, Fr Union forces wld have safe position to maneuver "from" (he repeated from).

The possibility, perhaps more, of a Chi invasion was always present but he thought that it cld not occur before two or three months at the earliest. He had good intelligence of status of Chi airfields and none were yet in a condition to handle jets for attacks on Tonkin. The Chi had shown they cld quickly construct airfields but it wld be two or three months at very least before they develop them for attack on Delta.

If Chi sent in only forty or sixty thousand "volunteers" he cld still hold them unless the "volunteers" were accompanied by modern and massive air support. If invasion were on a much larger scale and with air superiority he cld only fight defensively until he hoped, international aid against Chi wld somehow, somewhere be brought to bear.

HEATH

751G.00/3-652: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, March 6, 1952—9 p. m.
[Received 11:41 p. m.]

5384. Rptd info Moscow 159, Saigon 310, Rome, London, Bonn, Berlin unn.

Front page today's *Humanité* contains msg CPF central comite signed Duclos [1] to "Mr. President and dear comrade" Ho Chi Minh on occasion anniversary founding of Lien-Viet (League for National Independence) congratulating him and his people on recent successes in struggle for independence and peace. Central comite assures Ho of "active solidarity French people and working class" and condemns criminal war whose aims are contrary to true interests of France. Letter states defeat of French colonialists will at same time strike heavy blow against Amer warmongers seeking to dominate world.

Emb off discussed this treasonable msg with high FonOff official who expressed indignation its publication, particularly at this time when French policy Indochina subj such controversy, but gave no clue whether govt considering taking any retaliatory steps.

BRUCE

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[1] Jacques Duclos, Secretary of the French Communist Party; President of the Communist Group in the National Assembly.

751G.5 MSP/3-1152: Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 11, 1952—3 p. m.

1765. Dept pass MSA; rptd info Paris 624. At meeting with HC Secy Gautier, Fin Counselor Valls and Acting Econ Counselor Cat-tan, Tobler, Bartlett and I discussed STEM proposal send ltr re need budgetary data to Viets Natl Comite Amer econ aid in advance its reunion next week, the first meeting comite since Oct. Both Leg and STEM agreed it might afford appropriate opportunity present once again need for current receipt and expenditure data of Viets Govt at natl and regional levels. Copy text STEM letter being forwarded MSA with copy State.[1] Ltr does not threaten any econ sanction on part STEM if budgetary data not forthcoming. It stresses importance having such budgetary info as soon as possible in view imminent congressional hearings MSA program.

Gautier thoroughly accord both spirit and substance STEM *démarche* indicating Fr attempting exert similar pressure obtain financial data thru its position in institute of issue and thru Fr admin comite for milit aid to Vietnam. Said institutes restricted comite, on which Fr in effect has two out of three votes, has not acted on pending Viets application for loan because lack appropriate documentation re Viets receipts and expenditures. Walls stated it seemed now agreed by Vietnam that institutes restricted comite could not act without such documentation. He hoped data in some form or other might be presented at any moment. Gautier hoped Fr and Amers could exchange any info they obtained re Viets Govt finances.

Gautier, when associated subj Viets taxation informally raised, stated that he had urged Huu during latter months 1951 to reform tax system. He repeated claim often presented Fr sources that Fr presently pay 90 percent of direct taxes. Gautier's own thinking involved:

(*a*) Reinstituting personal or head tax at possibly 100 piasters a person; (*b*) Adjusting income tax deduction to take account cost of living, (*c*) Adding real war tax, and (*d*) Wiping out illegal taxes collected by various semi-autonomous mil-polit groups. His objective would be not only make everyone pay more, but everyone pay something.

Re new Viets under-Min of Fin, Pham Van Hai, Gautier indicated he had not known him before but thought he would be methodical and conscientious.

Comment: Leg believes latest STEM move in complete accord Dept's desire not condone bad admin practices on part Viets Govt. View controversial nature of tax question, particularly adjusting incidence thereof (presently small group relatively well-to-do Fr pay large share direct taxes and large masses Viets of almost all income groups pay indirect taxes), Leg intends submit recommendations soon to Dept re possible approaches Dept might wish Leg and STEM take in encouraging Vietnam reform taxes and tax collection.

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[1] The draft letter has not been identified in Department of State files.

Gautier said that he thought Huu would now really make some effective effort install budget system and increase tax revenues. Huu would probably not agree to publish his budget for fear opposition criticism and Gautier would not insist that he do provided authentic budget be shown Fr. He agreed budget must also be made available US in Vietnam's own interest.

Meanwhile, he, Gautier, and his counselors would keep us informed of all polit and econ developments.

HEATH

751G.551/3–1152 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 11, 1952—8 p. m.

1768. Rptd info Paris 625, Hanoi unn. On March 8 Lt. Col Nguyen Van Hinh FAF was made Brig General first Gen Officer new Viet Army, and slated for Chief of Staff. He is son of Min of Interior and Security Tam, and is Lt Col in FAF in which he at one time served with US aviation in North Africa (biographic details being pouched). Hinh is brave, handsome, attractive youth in middle thirties, more forthright and western in manner than most Vietnamese. It is difficult to see in him the moral force, the experience, sense of dedication or the mordant [*sic*] of a Chief of Staff, especially when one compares him with redoubtable Vo Nguyen Giap,[1] his opposite number on Commie side. It is expected he may be able to handle well the dipl aspects of job, as for example, with Americans (he speaks English) and other branches since he is Air Officer. He was most recently Chief of Mil Cabinet of Bao Dai and appears successfully to have companioned Chief of State with aid his dashing, Marseilles-blond wife. He is well disposed toward Americans.

Gen Salan seemed to believe his appointment as Brigadier General was reasonable enough but said he wld take some time to develop as Chief of Staff, but wld of course have advice Fr officer working closely with him.

Hinh's appointment was at insistence of Bao Dai over Huu's reservations and also represents triumph of Bao Dai's theses that ready-or-not Vietnamese officers must be named to Gen Officer positions. It is expected that more Vietnamese Brigadiers will shortly be named to head 3 divisions of Viet Army.

HEATH

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[1] Minister of National Defense of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

751G.551/3–1152 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 11, 1952—7 p. m.

1769. Rptd info Paris 626, Hanoi unn. Besides investiture new Cabinet,[1] principal event on Viet Independence Day in Saigon was parade Viet Army. For first time there not single white face in line of march and even Fr police along route little in evidence. Parade entirely marshaled by Viets.

On reviewing stand appeared flags of most nations recognizing Vietnam but along parade route for first time Viet colors appeared without Fr flag alongside.

Parade preceded by delivery of some 120 Viet Army decorations pinned on recipients by Bao Dai and Huu. Four thous men then marched past. New Viet Chief staff-to-be, Brig Gen Hinh (Legtel 1768 rptd Paris 625 Mar 11)[2] said that out of four armored cars in parade, two had returned from operations to take part and were to go back to field same evening. Likewise one of Btn Commanders flown in from his unit to be decorated. Some of Viet companies also returned immed to operational areas.

Noted in line of march were officer cadets from Dalat; units regular Viet bns; fairly large number small [garble] Viet conscripts armed with big Garand rifles from MDAP; delegations from Hoa Hao, Binh Xuyen, UMDC, and—in spite present difficulties—Caodaists; finally, closing parade, contingent of some 70 US Studebaker and GMC trucks, newly arrived under MDAP. These obviously impressed those in reviewing stand who had heard tendentious reports about US failure to deliver.

HEATH

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[1] On Mar. 8, the cabinet of Tran Van Huu was enlarged to give representation to the north and central regions of Vietnam equal with that of the south.

[2] *Supra.*

751G.5/3–1252 : Telegram

The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Gifford) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY LONDON, March 12, 1952—9 p. m.

3988. Rptd info Paris 1898, Saigon 18. Foreign Office has prepared telegram to Washington which, subject top-level clearance, will instruct British Embassy inform Department its desire review Indochina situation soonest. Telegram will mention series of ambiguous public statements by French officials regarding future French relations with Indochina, will mention persistent rumors French are conducting informal and tentative negotiations Ho Chi-Minh, and will refer pessimistically to likely short life of new French Government[1] which, if it falls in matter of weeks, will likely be replaced with leftist government committed to a *détente* in Indochina and possibly with Mendes-France[2] in position of authority.

Telegram will urge necessity for consideration of US–UK position in event French do decide cut their losses in Indochina. This problem, Foreign Office points out, has somewhat different slant from tripartite discussions recently concluded in Washington which understood to be concerned mainly with what might be done in event open Chinese aggression against Indochina. Present problem is what is to be done if French, faced with financial crisis, decide it has no recourse but to pull out as rapidly as circumstances permit, leaving Southeast Asia relatively defenseless.

GIFFORD

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[1] The government of Edgar Faure fell on Feb. 29 over a tax issue. A new government was formed by Antoine Pinay on Mar. 8. Robert Schuman and Jean Letourneau retained their positions as Foreign Minister and Minister for the Associated States, respectively.

[2] Pierre Mendès-France, a leader of the Radical Socialist Party; advocate of a negotiated withdrawal from Indochina.

751G.5/3–1452 : Telegram

The Consul General at Singapore (Baldwin) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SINGAPORE, March 14, 1952—2 p. m.

989. Rptd info London 87, Paris 7, Saigon 40. Pouched Bangkok, Manila and Djakarta.

Single agenda item for meeting Mar 13 British Defense Coordination Comite FE was development in Singapore of support base for French Forces Indochina.

MacDonald[1] expressed view that original proposal by De Lattre was "very ambitious" and probably materially changed by agreement at Washington tri-lateral military talks that US shipments would proceed direct to Indochina. Comite agreed ask French what revised requirements are in light of Wash talks. While awaiting answer comite will develop more precise plan logistics facilities which can be made available Singapore with some additional expenditure, after UK Govt authorizes expenditure. Agreed also discuss political economic aspects of matter with Singapore auths but foresaw no difficulties there.

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[1] Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner General for the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia.

Comite working paper[2] containing estimate assistance which cld be offered French with existing facilities airpouched to Dept.

MacDonald gave résumé recent visit to Thai Indochina and talk with Letourneau. Fol are highlights: Letourneau professed to be reassured about military situation in Indochina. Believed withdrawal French Forces from Hoa Binh will strengthen over-all French military position by providing 19 additional battalions to "wipe out" infiltrating Viet Minh Forces and hold defense perimeter. Brigadier Field (Brit MilAtt Saigon) believes Letourneau over-optimistic and underestimating seriousness Viet Minh infiltration. Field also believes any major offensive by French Forces unlikely for considerable time.

Letourneau admitted polit situation Indochina much weaker and requires more vigorous French efforts. Said Bao Dai, while better than is generally believed is not doing proper leadership job. Letourneau encountered difficulties in attempting convince Bao Dai to take necessary action.

Believed serious weakness is inferiority Bao Dai's subordinates and said present govt is "not governing". Emphasized that Indochina must have "govt of natl concentration". Bao Dai agreed but asked Letourneau take initiative. Letourneau declined and referred to Vietnam independence and importance of asserting it.

Letourneau intended recommend to French Govt that job of High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief be divided, that French send best man available to be High Comm.

Letourneau assured MacDonald that French "wld finish job" in Indochina and not negotiate with Ho Chi Minh. He admitted existence of strong feeling in France favoring liquidation of Indochinese affair but believed if Bao Dai organizes effective govt, French people would be willing finish job. Otherwise French resentment against "wasting Fr lives in hopeless cause" likely assume more serious proportions.

MacDonald recognized latter remark may have been partly designed influence UK Govt but he generally agrees with Letourneau's political assessment. Said "we must pray for good French High Comm".

MacDonald said progress still being made in developing Vietnam Army but that strong hand of De Lattre greatly missed, particularly in view increased "petty and self-interested" Vietnam objections to Fr influence in military matters.

Summing up views re Indochina MacDonald described situation as dangerous, critical but not hopeless. He still believes Union Forces capable resisting Viet Minh if latter unassisted by Chinese Commie volunteers.

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[2] Not printed.

[Here follows a brief account of MacDonald's remarks with respect to Thailand.]

BALDWIN

751G.5/3–1552 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Bonsal) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, March 15, 1952—3 p. m.
[Received 3:28 p. m.]

5623. Rptd info London 1552, Saigon 325. London tel 3988, Mar 12 (rptd Paris 1898 Saigon 29[*18*]).[1]

While US–UK review IC situation may be desirable at this time Emb of opinion that Brit FonOff tel as outlined in reftel poses problem prematurely and gives undue emphasis or erroneous interpretation to certain aspects of the Fr scene in relation to IC. Brit Emb here with whom we discussed problem without ref to FonOff tel holds generally similar views to ours which are at variance with reftel.

While new Fr Govt may be short lived Emb has no reason to believe that it is likely to be replaced with leftist govt much less one committed to "*détente* in IC". Emb continues to believe as it stated in its tel 3796 Dec 26, '51 (rptd Saigon 220 London unn)[2] that no Fr Govt in foreseeable future cld for reasons stated therein propose voluntary withdrawal from IC except thru forced milit evacuation. Those reasons remain valid and with present prospects increased US aid, proposals for which by Secy Lovett to Congressional comites given prominence in yesterday's press,[3] there seems less likelihood that under existing circumstances Fr Govt wld decide on withdrawal. However there remains ever present danger of financial difficulties which unless solution is found wld increase pressures on govt to cut losses in IC.

With respect series ambiguous public statements by Fr officials mentioned in reftel Emb assumes ref is to statements such as that by Mendes-France who was recently quoted by *Combat* as advocating negots with Ho Chi Minh to end IC conflict. This is his oft repeated thesis and not new. We are reliably informed that Letourneau has recently told him that if he (Mendes-France) were PriMin it wld be as impossible for him as for any other PriMin to withdraw from IC since to do so wld mean the end of the Fr Union and the crack up of France's alliances particularly with US. Letourneau himself has certainly given impression since his return from IC that there can be no thought of Fr withdrawal from IC, a view similar to that said to be held by recent Nat Assembly mission to IC.

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[1] *Ante*, p. 66.

[2] For text, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 573.

[3] On Mar. 13, 1952, administration leaders delivered general statements in support of the Mutual Security Program before a joint session of the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees of the Senate. The statement of Robert A. Lovett, Secretary of Defense, addressed itself in part to Indochina, urging an increased appropriation of funds for that area. For the text of Lovett's remarks on Indochina, see *Mutual Security Act of 1952: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate* (82d Cong., 2d sess.), p. 24.

For documentation on the Mutual Security Program in general, see volume I. Documentation on the Mutual Security Program as it operated in the Far East is included in material on general U.S. policies with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII.

Devinat,[4] whose views were reported in Embtel 3796 is quoted in recent interview published by provincial paper as saying that time had come to face IC problem squarely, that several tens of billions of francs cld be lopped off by strict control milit affairs energetic reorgan civil affairs and making Vietnamese Govt face its own duties. He called for internatl aid to accompany such econ and proposed Pacific Pact saying pact wld come into play automatically in event danger and wld permit mutual aid. MRP comite in recent mtg as reported Embtel 4555 Mar 10[5] called for increased US aid and for UN internatl forces in event Chi Commie intervention but made no mention possibility withdrawal.

We have no reason to believe that withdrawal from Indochina is price for Socialist support of any future govt. As matter of fact this is subj into which we have looked recently because of press rumors during the last crisis that Pinay had attempted to obtain Socialist support by offering to put govt on record in favor of Fr withdrawal from IC. What Pinay apparently did was to sound out Socialists on this point. Mollet SYG of Socialists told us that he immed and with indignation rejected the imputation that Socialists wanted withdrawal, stressing that what they want is substantially increased "internatl" assistance to Fr and Vietnamese forces in which as Dept aware they do not differ from other parties. . . .[6]

Despite rumors reported by Leg Saigon Fr making feelers toward negot with Ho Chi Minh Emb has not been able obtain any confirmations such action here and notes Letourneau's latest statement his subj in which he said time had not come for such negot (Embtel 5537 Mar. 13).[5]

Dept will recall statements in Embtel 3796 that "French are becoming increasingly sensitive to the possibility of a situation in which the Fr Govt might be confronted either with the necessity for rapid withdrawal or a milit disaster" and that "public sentiment for withdrawal in the absence of adoption of some course of action envisaging either internalization [*internationalization*] of IC problem or Fr receipt of massive additional aid will gain steadily and perhaps at accelerated rate". Under impulse of increasing Fr financial difficulties sentiment for withdrawal from IC or some solution which wld appreciably ease the Fr burden has grown in polit and Natl Assembly circles since desp of Embtel 3796. Hoa Binh evacuation served to heighten Fr fears and make evident end of conflict contemplated by De Lattre was mirage for foreseeable future. Offsetting unfavorable factors such as financial crisis and Hoa Binh evacuation were on other hand favorable developments such as optimistic appraisal of IC situation made by Nat Assembly mission and Letourneau both of which wld be expected to have influence on Nat Assembly. Fact remains however that Fr Govt still has to face problem of finding funds and troops for IC effort.

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[4] Paul Devinat, a leader of the Radical Socialist party; former minister.

[5] Not printed.

[6] Ellipsis in the source text.

In Emb's opinion immed Anglo-Amer problem is to continue seeking ways and means to keep French in IC and encourage and help them build strong Vietnamese fighting force which is French policy objective also. Barring open Chinese intervention latter continues to hold best promise of permitting gradual transfer center of gravity Fr milit efforts from IC to Eur.

BONSAL

751G.00/3-1552

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison)

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 15, 1952.

Subject: Southeast Asia

Participants: Mr. F. S. Tomlinson, Counselor, British Embassy
John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State

Mr. Tomlinson called at his request to leave a memorandum (copy attached)[1] concerning serious views taken by the United Kingdom Government about the situation in Indo-China with particular reference to the possible weakening of French determination to continue the fight as well as the possibility of overt Chinese Communist intervention. Mr. Tomlinson said that the Ambassador had been instructed to approach Secretary Acheson on this matter but that in view of his imminent departure from the city he had requested Mr. Tomlinson to bring the memorandum to me with the thought that when Sir Oliver[2] returns, in about one week, the Secretary might be able to give him any preliminary views of the United States Government. Mr.

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[1] Not printed.

[2] Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador in the United States.

Tomlinson said he was instructed to refer to the conversations between Secretary Acheson and Foreign Minister Eden in Lisbon,[3] at which time the Secretary had stated that he hoped it would be possible to have tripartite talks on Southeast Asia, with particular reference to Indo-China, in about a month or six weeks time.

. . . .

Mr. Tomlinson was informed that the United States Government was urgently studying the situation in Indo-China with the view to being prepared, as the Secretary had indicated, for tripartite discussions at an early date. It was not possible to say at this time just when these American studies[4] would be over, but it was hoped that it would be comparatively shortly. Mr. Tomlinson was also informed that if it appeared during the course of the coming week that there was any more useful statement which could be made to him, he would be called in. In response to a specific question, Mr. Tomlinson was informed that while the American studies were directed primarily to the situation in Indo-China they nevertheless were also concerned with the general situation in all of Southeast Asia.

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[3] Documentation on the Ninth Session of the North Atlantic Council, Lisbon, Feb. 20–25, is printed in volume v.

[4] Reference is to NSC 124 and related material, described in footnote 2, p. 29.

751G.5/3–1952 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, March 19, 1952—7 p. m.

1829. Rptd info Paris 639, London 34. Re London's tel 3988, March 12[1] and Paris tel 5623, March 15.[2]

Letourneau last month and very recently Gautier and Huu assured me Fr Govt not now engaged in or considering open negots with VM, and I credit these assurances.

I agree that sum of statements on subj by Fr leaders are equivocal. At very least, they seem invite offer to parley, either from VM or from neutrals like India, on an international framework in gen conf on FE matters fol conclusion Korean armistice.

It is true that possibility such negot has never been wholly absent from Fr mind. De Lattre actually confirmed (Legtel 1362 of February 2, 1951 also Legtel 1340, January 30, 1951)[3] that Fr Govt or important part of it was favoring armistice negots just after his Vinh Yenh success. This was at time when Letourneau made his statement that "happily the doors have never been closed between the two camps", a declaration entirely incompatible with the Vinh Yenh policy of categoric hostilities. Fr have never characterized IC hostilities as state of war but as rebellion. Latter can be more easily negotiated than total war. Dispersion, multi-dimensional character of fighting and fronts, and patchwork of defections and negots for defection involve broad and frequent contact between enemies in framework of intelligence operations. These channels may be, and probably have been, used for soundings by one side or other at critical turning points.

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[1] *Ante*, p. 66.

[2] *Ante*, p. 69.

[3] Neither printed.

Fr long-range planning for worst contingency may give rise to still other rumors of negots (for example, head of SDECE pointed out that in case major disaster to delta, i.e. cutting of Hanoi–Haiphong road, withdrawal Fr and Eurasian civil element and rear troops cld only be managed by negot. He did not say whether these wld be with VM or Chi). We do not know but believe it possible Fr may have at some time made preliminary contacts in order identify possible channels of communication and that this activity may have given rise to reports.

To sum up it inconceivable to me that Fr at this precise time wld initiate negots looking toward an armistice and if they did that there wld be anything like a favorable response from VM. Latter with increasing Chi armament and other aid are still evidently thinking in terms of eventual victory. Fr have reports of lowered morale among VM troops as result recent battle operations and there good evidence lowered morale and growing anti-VM sentiment among populations subjected VM rule. But Fr have no reports indicating any slackening of will or optimism on part VM polit and milit command.

HEATH

751G.5/3-1952 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, March 19, 1952—8 p. m.

1830. Rptd Paris 640, London 35. I agree with Paris (Paris tel 5623 to Dept of Mar 15)[1] that while a US–UK review of IC situation may be desirable talks shld not be based on probably erroneous propositions that (1) Fr may be presently conducting tentative negots with Ho Chi Minh and (2) that present Fr Govt may shortly be replaced with Leftist Govt committed to a "détente" in IC. I agree also that immed Anglo-Amer problem is continue seek ways and means to keep Fr Union Forces in IC and help them build strong Viet Natl Army.

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[1] *Ante*, p. 69.

As regards (1) Legtel 1829 of Mar 19[2] expresses our belief that Fr Govt not now engaged in or considering ceasefire or peace negots with Viet Minh. This telegram explains causes persistence rumors such negots.

As for point (2) Paris tel 5623 seems to dispose of likelihood of early replacement of present Fr Govt by Leftist Cabinet committed to "détente" in IC. In recent conversation Acting High Comm Gautier said he thought unlikely that there wld be a Leftist or any other govt taking office in near future with program of ending or reducing Fr effort IC altho he admitted there was considerable opposition and "lassitude" over indefinite continuance present scale of Fr human and financial sacrifices.

Whether or not we now review situation with British we shld, I believe at some quite early date have frank high-level discussions with Fr as to what they or we can do bring some early improvement this situation which at present one very slow progress not far removed from stalemate in both polit and milit sectors. There is probably nothing we or Fr can do in the next few months to add importantly to pace of milit progress unless VM command makes some unexpected mistakes. An increase of our milit aid is urgent but probably nothing that we can presently do will greatly accelerate the pace of delivery of scarce supply items.

But on polit, including econ and financial side, there is something to be done to break this near-stalemate.

Any talks with Fr shld be bilateral rather than trilateral. The Brit are not in direct participation in this situation. Their presence during frank discussion of IC problem and ways and means of solution might be embarrassing to Fr or ourselves.

Letourneau who has been in office for better part of two years and very possibly will continue there for some time even if govt changes has long been desirous of visiting US. An invitation to him might afford appropriate occasion for useful discussion of polit and economic problems which hope expressed during Juin talks last Jan (see Legtel 1347, Jan 8).[3] Such talks might be preceded by review of IC situation between London and Wash.

Leg will shortly submit situation report updating appreciation contained Legtel 1347, Jan 8 and suggesting topics which might now be discussed with Fr.

HEATH

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[2] *Supra.*

[3] In telegram 1347 from Saigon, Jan. 8, 1952, not printed, Minister Heath proposed an agenda for the tripartite military talks held in Washington on Jan. 11, and offered suggestions regarding the position of the United States on various agenda items. (790.5/1–852) The tripartite conversations are described in telegram 974 to Saigon, Jan. 15, p. 14.

Secretary's Memoranda, lot 53 D 444, "Bruce"

Memorandum of Conversation, by Paul J. Sturm [1]

PARIS, March 21, 1952.

Present: Mr. Jean Monnet, Commissaire Général du Plan de Modernisation et d'Equipement
Mr. Pierre Uri, Conseiller Economique et Financier
Mr. Sturm, Consul at Hanoi (on consultation in Paris)[2]

At his invitation I called on Mr. Jean Monnet, Commissaire Général du Plan de Modernisation et d'Equipement, at 11 o'clock this morning. I had known Mr. Monnet in Algiers during the war, and brought him letters from close mutual friends. Since Mr. Monnet was unable to receive me immediately he had me discuss the general problem of France's position in Indochina with one of his principal assistants, Mr. Pierre Uri, Conseiller Economique et Financier. It appeared evident from my conversation with Mr. Uri that the interest of Mr. Monnet and his colleagues in the Indochinese problem relates primarily to its effect on the French economy and the position of France in Europe. Mr. Uri quoted statistics indicating that the equivalent of the whole current American contribution to French defense is being absorbed by Indochina, where only half the actual military expenditures are being met by such contribution. Mr. Uri indicated that this course cannot be long pursued and that the moment for radical decision may arrive abruptly.

When Mr. Monnet came into the room he explained that he had been detained by questions arising from the current meeting of the Ministers of the Council of Europe. He expressed interest in my assignment to Hanoi and declared that Indochina was the key to the present French political and military position. He said that he intended to speak to me very personally and frankly and went on to say that in his view France had no alternative except to withdraw from Indochina, on pain of failing to meet its commitments in Europe. He said that American critics had indicated the necessity for fiscal and other reforms in France to strengthen the nation's international position, and while admitting that reforms were still necessary, he said that the French rate of taxation, about 30% of the national income, is the highest in the world and implied that the burden on the French people could not be increased. Mr. Monnet said that he had expressed these sentiments to Messrs. Acheson and Harriman [3] at Lisbon and that they were well aware of his feelings. Apart from the purely economic aspect, Mr. Monnet said, there was the question of the army cadres which by their presence in Indochina prevent the proper constitution of the army in France, He added that it is impossible to contemplate the reconstitution of a German army without a corresponding strengthening of army establishments in Metropolitan France.

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[1] On Mar. 25, Philip W. Bonsal, Chargé in France, transmitted this memorandum to Ambassador David K. E. Bruce in Washington. Bruce had been named Under Secretary of State on Feb. 7, entering into office on Apr. 1.

[2] Sturm was en route to his post.

[3] W. Averell Harriman, Director for Mutual Security.

Mr. Monnet said very emphatically that the French in Indochina were up against an immediate crisis, the solution of which could not be long delayed. He said that the western world would awake one morning to find that France was no longer able to do anything further in Indochina. I referred to the interest of the western powers generally in the maintenance of Southeast Asian defenses against Communism, which gave Mr. Monnet the opportunity of stating that resistance in that area is one of common interest to all the western powers and that the burden accordingly must be more equitably distributed. I referred to Secretary Acheson's recent statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the course of foreign aid hearings as evidence that there is acute consciousness in Washington of the danger in Indochina.[4] Mr. Monnet said that if that was the case, there should be immediate action and that long-range planning would not meet the requirement. With further reference to Mr. Monnet's statement regarding possible French withdrawal, I indicated that this would appear to be extremely difficult since the French in Indochina have a very large tiger by the tail. He immediately agreed that withdrawal would be catastrophic but might nevertheless be dictated by events.

Mr. Monnet asked me if I had talked to any Ministers in Paris and I replied that I had not. He said that I should talk to Mr. Pleven[5] and said that he would try to arrange an interview. I told him that I had talked to members of the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Associated States. Sardonically he commented that such persons would be "polite" and reassuring with regard to French intentions in Indochina, but that I should not be taken in by any statements they might make for the pressure of events would certainly give them the lie.

During the course of this conversation I received the impression that both Mr. Monnet and his staff have relatively little concern with the Far East and feel that France's interest lies overwhelmingly in Europe. My references on several occasions to the interest of the western democracies in Southeast Asia as a whole met with no real response, and I was left with the impression that if Mr. Monnet were in a position to dictate the policy, he would leave the Far East to whatever arrangements the United States and the United Kingdom might be able to make there, with a minimum of French participation. In other words, Monnet would liquidate whatever now remains of French interests in Indochina.

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[4] Reference is to testimony by Secretary Acheson in support of the Mutual Security Program on Mar. 18. A portion of his remarks dealt with Indochina and its effect on the French financial situation; for text, see *Mutual Security Act of 1952: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate* (82d Cong., 2d sess.), p. 93.

[5] René Pleven, Minister of Defense since Mar. 8, 1952; former Premier.

PAUL J. STURM

751G.00/3-2552

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 25, 1952.

Subject: Comments on British Memorandum of March 15, 1952 [2] Concerning Indochina (for use in conversations with British Ambassador).

As it is expected that the British Ambassador will call on you this week with reference to the British memorandum of March 15, 1952 concerning Indochina, the following comments are submitted for your guidance:

1) *Weakening of French determination to continue to fight in Indochina.*

We do not believe the current British concern regarding French intentions in Indochina is justified. The statements of M. Letourneau which are quoted in the memorandum have since been superseded by other formal declarations made by the same gentleman in his capacity as Minister of Associated States in the newly constituted Pinay Government. In a press conference on March 12th he stated that:

> "*a.* Ho Chi Minh is too important in the Communist game to remain alone. There can be no illusions on this subject. If our enemies, through exhaustion or weariness, ask for peace one day, France, in agreement with the three Indochina States, would obviously not refuse to examine conditions under which it might be considered. This hour has *not* come.
>
> "*b.* If the situation is not in itself satisfactory, it has clearly improved over past year.
>
> "*c.* My visit in Indochina was prolonged in order to make known that France was not changing and was remaining there. The Indochina problem henceforth 'overlaps' world policy. France must face the duties she has assumed in order to keep the confidence of not only the French Union but also of her allies. There is no question of choice between the problem of Indochina and that of Europe."

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[1] Drafted by William M. Gibson of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.

[2] Not printed, but see the memorandum of conversation by Allison, Mar. 15, p. 71.

It is therefore,

Recommended, that you inform the Ambassador that we believe that these statements appear to be designed to appease the concern regarding Indochina which has been evident in both French and foreign circles in recent months and to which the British memorandum refers. Our Embassy in Paris reports that Letourneau's declarations can, in their opinion, be accepted at face value and that there can be no thought of French withdrawal from Indochina at the present time or in the near future. Finally, reference should be made to M. Letourneau's recent visit to London (March 18th) when he conferred with Lord Reading[3] and about which Sir Oliver is doubtless fully informed. On that occasion he is said to have attempted to dispel any British fears concerning present French intentions in Indochina. The Ambassador might be queried on this point.

2) *Recent Contact of French Representatives with Viet Minh Representatives in Indochina; Russian Mediation in Indochina War; French Approach to Chinese Legation in Bern.*

. . . We do know that it was reported that M. Sainteny,[4] a former French Colonial official who had close relations with Ho Chi Minh in 1945–6, is said to have been in Vietnam recently for the purpose of making contact with Ho's representatives but we have no proof of this fact. If any of the allegations are correct we would be obliged to revise our present conclusion that French intentions in Indochina are actually as claimed and review our present Indochina policy entirely. It is,

Recommended, that Sir Oliver be informed as above and told that we would be gratified to know if the British Government has proof of any of these allegations.

3) *Negotiation with Ho Chi Minh, from weakness, brought on by French financial situation.*

It is our opinion that the French will stay in Indochina providing they have two assurances: (*a*) That the US will continue to meet the French budgetary deficit or that portion of it caused by the Indochina war either directly or indirectly; (*b*) That the solution of the French manpower problem can be reached through successful formation of the national armies. All this is, of course, predicated upon a continuation of the US military assistance program. This opinion has been formed after a series of consultations with the French Ambassador and Counselor.

We do not believe that Ho Chi Minh would accept any French proposal to negotiate in the near future even if one were made, which we consider an almost equally unlikely possibility. If the French financial crisis were to become so acute as to make it necessary for the French to retrench in their military expenditures we believe that the retrenchment would take place in some place other than Indochina if only because they would be obliged to carry on in Indochina for at least a sufficient time to assure a successful withdrawal. The plans for any withdrawal would have to be made well in advance and would take months to carry out successfully. We are confident that the French would consult with us as soon as they had determined to set such a course. It is,

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[3] Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

[4] Jean Sainteny, French Commissioner for Tonkin and Northern Annam, 1945–1947.

Recommended, that Sir Oliver be informed that we do not believe the present French Government is negotiating with Ho Chi Minh nor could if it wished. If the French should finally decide to withdraw from Indochina because of financial weakness or for any other reason the withdrawal process itself would be so complex that the French would be obliged to consult with their allies, particularly the US and Britain, in order to obtain assistance in carrying it out. If only for this reason we believe the French will consult with us in sufficient time to permit us to reexamine the question thoroughly before any irrevocable decisions regarding withdrawal are reached.

4) *US Agreement with UK Assessment as Presented in Memorandum.*

. . . We do not believe that the French are either planning a withdrawal from Indochina at the present time or negotiating or attempting to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh. We do, however, recognize that the possibility of a decision to withdraw is ever present and that the question should be watched carefully. We also recognize that, although a negotiated peace with Ho Chi Minh is neither feasible nor advantageous under present circumstances, the possibility should always be held open so that if Ho's fortunes should founder a means should be open to him to request negotiation. It is,

Recommended that the Ambassador be so informed.

5) *Statement made to Mr. Eden in Lisbon by the Secretary concerning further allied conversations regarding a course of action in Indochina*

It is presumed that when you informed Mr. Eden in Lisbon that you hoped to be able to discuss the Indochina problem in about a month's time after a US evaluation had been completed you had the current NSC study in mind. You will remember that the NSC has now directed the Department to suggest a course of *diplomatic* action designed to seek support of our allies for military action in the Indochina area based on two hypotheses: (1) That an aggression against Indochina be countered by a defense on the spot and in the peripheral area of China, which is thought to include the three southern provinces, but is not to extend beyond that; (2) That a Chinese aggression against Indochina be countered by an attack on the China mainland as a whole, without limitations.[5] The Department is now engaged in fulfilling the NSC directive. Until this is done and the views of the Department of Defense, including the Joint Chiefs, and the Department can be reconciled, it is

Recommended that you defer any commitment to Sir Oliver concerning further bipartite or tripartite discussions.

. . . .

Note: Intelligence Questions contained in Paragraphs 5 and 6 of British Memorandum.

"R" has addressed a separate memorandum entitled "Intelligence Factors in discussions with the British on Indochina" to G[6] which should be consulted by the Secretary in referring to that portion of the British memorandum concerned with intelligence matters.

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[5] Reference is to NSC Action No. 614, taken by the National Security Council at its 113th Meeting, Mar. 5, in regard to NSC 124, Feb. 13, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Communist Aggression in Southeast Asia." (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions") NSC 124 and related material is included in documentation on general U.S. policies with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII. Regarding NSC consideration of NSC 124, see also *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 8, pp. 502–507.

[6] The memorandum, "Intelligence Factors in Discussions with British on Indochina," not printed, was directed by W. Park Armstrong, Jr., Special Assistant for Intelligence, to H. Freeman Matthews, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, on Mar. 25. (751G.5/3–1253)

751G.00/3–2552

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 25, 1952.

Subject: Possible Interview with French Ambassador for Purpose of Obtaining Formal Assurances that the French Government is not (*a*) Contemplating a Withdrawal from Indochina or, (*b*) Negotiating with Ho Chi Minh.

The British Ambassador will call upon you during the week of March 24 in order to receive your preliminary comments on the British memorandum concerning Indochina. A separate memorandum has been prepared suggesting some observations you may care to make to Sir Oliver as "preliminary comments".[1] Paragraph 2 of the British memorandum speaks of certain secret information available to the British which has led them to suspect that the French are seeking a way out in Indochina. We have no evidence that any of the British allegations are true and suggest that you ask the Ambassador whether they have proof of any or all of them.

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[1] *Supra.*

If his answer is in the affirmative it is suggested that you call in the French Ambassador and that he be informed as follows:

During the last few months several prominent French personages have stated, both officially and privately, that a French withdrawal from Indochina would be desirable and that an attempt to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh should or is being made. We have on several recent occasions through our Embassy in Paris and Legation in Saigon as well as in our conversations with the Embassy in Washington received assurances that the present French Government does not intend to withdraw from Indochina and is neither negotiating nor attempting to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh or his representatives. We have noted the recent declarations made by Minister Letourneau in his official capacity as Minister of Associated States denying these allegations, most recently in his press conference on March 12.

While the U.S. Government understands that M. Letourneau as Minister of Associated States does speak for the French Government in the matter, it would be helpful if the Ambassador could reaffirm the assurances given by him to the press. We would specifically request that the Ambassador confirm that the French Government is not attempting to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh, either directly or indirectly. Moreover, we would remind the Ambassador that although we accept the assurances of the French Government that there is no intention of withdrawing from Indochina at the present time or in the foreseeable future, our special position as a contributor, both militarily and otherwise, to the defense of Indochina permits us to expect that we would be advised promptly of any change in the present policy of the French Government.

751G.00/3-2652

Briefing Paper for the Under Secretary of State (*Bruce*)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 26, 1952.

INDOCHINA

1. *Military Aid*—293 million dollars has been requested for FY '53 for Indochina. If granted this will bring the total appropriation for this area since 1950 to over 600 million dollars. The flow of US matériel is satisfactory, but French inability to supply cadres and funds for troop pay and maintenance may reduce the expansion of the Vietnam national army during the current calendar year to an additional two divisions instead of an additional four as was originally planned. Present force is four divisions plus irregulars.

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[1] This memorandum was prepared by Robert E. Hoey, Officer in Charge of Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs. It was one of several briefing papers on Far Eastern subjects transmitted to the incoming Under Secretary of State by John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, on Mar. 27.

2. *Military Situation*—The military situation has not changed significantly during the past month. A gradual clean-up within the Hanoi perimeter is progressing slowly. There have been no Viet Minh attacks by other than small units. The flow of military aid from China continues with reported Soviet material including mortars and trucks. There is some evidence that French troops have been returned to France, over and above the normal rotation.

3. *Internal Political Situation*—Tran Van Huu was installed on March 8, 1950 as Prime Minister of a reshuffled cabinet which in general showed some improvement over the previous one. Huu maintains the Defense and Finance portfolios. A Deputy Minister of Defense has been appointed as well as a Vietnamese Army Chief of Staff.

4. *External Political Affairs*—The most serious recent development has been the receipt on March 15 of a memorandum from the British Embassy, Washington, alleging that: (*a*) The French are seeking a negotiated peace and have recently been in touch with the Viet Minh for that purpose, (*b*) are seeking Russian mediation to arrange a truce and (*c*) have apparently approached the Chinese Communist Legation in Bern for a similar purpose. The Secretary proposes to discuss this matter with the British Ambassador in the near future. We have no evidence that any of the British allegations are true.

PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "S/P Papers"

Paper Prepared in the Department of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, March 27, 1952.]

DRAFT—INDOCHINA SECTION OF NSC PAPER [2]

Problem: To determine the policy of the United States toward the countries of Southeast Asia, and in particular, the courses of action which may be taken by the United States to strengthen and coordinate resistance to communism on the part of the governments and peoples of the area.

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[1] This memorandum was drafted by Charles C. Stelle of the Policy Planning Staff, pursuant to NSC Action No. 614 of Mar. 5, which called for the preparation of studies on various aspects and contingencies related to the Communist threat to Southeast Asia. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions") This memorandum reflected comments from within S/P and from other offices of the Department. By memorandum of Apr. 1, Philip H. Watts, Executive Secretary of the Policy Planning Staff, transmitted it to H. Freeman Matthews, Deputy Under Secretary of State; Charles E. Bohlen, Counselor; Philip C. Jessup, Ambassador at Large; and John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. (PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "S/P Papers") According to a marginal notation on Watts' memorandum of transmittal, a meeting regarding the paper was held the same day in Matthews' office, at which S/P was represented by Paul H. Nitze, Director; John H. Ferguson, Deputy Director; and Stelle.

According to the distribution list accompanying the source text, Stelle provided the Department of Defense with copies of this paper on Apr. 2.

[2] This draft, prepared in connection with NSC Action No. 614, was intended as a contribution to a report in the NSC 124 series, which dealt with the defense of Southeast Asia as a whole. Documentation on the NSC 124 series is presented in volume XII.

Assumption: That identifiable Chinese Communist aggression against Southeast Asia does not take place.

Analysis:

IMPORTANCE OF INDOCHINA

The strategic importance of Indochina derives from its geographical position as a key to the defense of mainland Southeast Asia; its economic value as a potential large scale exporter of rice; and its political importance as an example of Western resistance to Communist expansion.

a. It is generally accepted that should Indochina fall to Communist control, Thailand and Burma could be expected soon to make their own accommodations with the Communist bloc. It is also generally accepted that in case of Communist occupation of Tonkin there is no other militarily defensible position for the West north of the Isthmus of Kra.

The relationship of Indochina to the defense or orientation of Malaya and Indonesia is somewhat more debatable. It appears possible that Malaya could be defended against whatever forces the Communists might bring to bear, provided the West maintained control of the sea and provided the local situation in Malaya did not deteriorate too greatly by reason of Communist proximity to the Malayan border. On the other hand it is obvious that Communist successes in Indochina, Thailand and Burma would stimulate bandwagon jumping among the already cautious Chinese population of Malaya, and would tend to add strength to anti-Western elements in precariously neutralist Indonesia. It is possible therefore that in spite of the theoretical military defensibility of Malaya at the Kra, the loss of Indochina would in fact lead to the loss to the Communist bloc of the entire Southeast Asia mainland, and eventually Indonesia as well.

b. The problem of whether or not the loss of Indochina would be followed by the loss of Malaya and Indonesia as well as of Thailand and Burma is of major importance in assessing the *economic* importance of maintaining the Western position in Indochina. If Indochina's loss to the Communists were accompanied by the loss of Thailand and Burma alone, Western losses would consist primarily of the loss of valuable sources of exportable rice surpluses. The loss of these rice exporting areas would impose a two fold pressure on Japan by removing simultaneously a source of food and a potential field for Japanese export development. The loss of the three rice surplus countries would thus create real difficulties for the continued maintenance of a Western oriented Japan. Finally, the control of the three rice surplus countries by the Communists would provide them with an economic advantage of far greater importance to them than the loss of the area may be to the free world.

If, however, the loss of Indochina were accompanied by the loss of Malaya and Indonesia as well, the West would suffer economic losses of major importance, and the Western orientation of Japan would be seriously jeopardized. Malaya and Indonesia are major sources of tin and rubber. Malaya is an important source of dollar earnings for the UK. Indonesia is an important secondary source of oil for the West. Communist control of all of Southeast Asia would remove the chief potential area for Japanese commercial development, and would so add to the already powerful mainland pulls upon Japan as to make it dubious that Japan could refrain from reaching an accommodation with the Communist bloc.

c. Communist successes in Indochina would, in any event, have major political and psychological consequences for the West. Southeast Asia and South Asia certainly, and possibly important areas of the Middle East would be influenced toward alignment with the Communist bloc. Japan, economic pressures aside, would be more disposed to accommodate itself to the Communist bloc by reason of its altered evaluation of the relative balance of power. Western European confidence in the strength and future of the West would be further undermined.

PRESENT SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

5. In the long run, the security of Indochina against communism will depend upon the development of native governments able to command the support of the masses of the people and national armed forces capable of relieving the French of the major burden of maintaining internal security. The Vietnamese Government has been slow to assume its responsibilities and has continued to suffer from a lack of strong leadership. It has had to contend with: (*a*) lingering Vietnamese suspicion of any French-supported regime, combined with the apathetic and "fence-sitting" attitude of the bulk of the people; (*b*) the difficulty, common to all new and inexperienced governments, of training the necessary personnel and building an efficient administration; (*c*) the failure of factional and sectional groups to unite in a concerted national effort; and (*d*) the relatively ineffective character of Bao Dai's administration.

Efforts to create a National Vietnamese Army—an essential prerequisite to growth in the political stature of the Vietnam government and to an ultimate non-Communist solution in Indochina—have made some progress, and Vietnamese units have performed creditably in recent engagements. Plans call for the expansion of the army from its present strength of 120,000 to 150,000. However, it will take considerable time before the planned forces are organized, trained, and equipped in battalion units, and even longer before effective divisional units can be put into the field. Progress in the formation of the army is retarded by lack of capable officers at all levels of command, French budgetary difficulties, shortages of equipment, and the apathetic attitude of the population. At the same time, differences of opinion between the Vietnamese leaders and the French, particularly over who will exercise control over the Vietnam Army, have prevented in the past full cooperation and maximum progress in the army's development. Delay in establishing a Vietnam Army under Vietnamese control has been a contributing factor in limiting popular support of the Vietnamese regime.

The military situation in Indochina continues to be one of stalemate. Increased U.S. aid to the Franco-Vietnamese forces has been one important factor in enabling them to withstand recent communist attacks. However, Chinese aid to the Viet Minh in the form of logistic support, training, and technical advisors is increasing at a comparable rate. In the absence of intervention by important forces other than those presently engaged, and provided French will and effort remain undiminished, the prospect is for a continuation of the present stalemate.

POSSIBILITIES OF DIMINUTION OF FRENCH WILL OR EFFORT

The French Government is increasingly concerned over France's ability to maintain its position in Indochina. There is a growing official feeling in France that it cannot simultaneously support presently projected military efforts in both Europe and Asia without greater U.S. aid. If the French were unable, by remaining in Indochina, to secure financial assistance for both their European and Indochinese operations, and were forced to choose between the two, they would probably view their Indochinese commitment as of lesser importance. Moreover, there has been a growing popular feeling that the distant and costly Indochinese war offers few rewards even if won. This feeling is increasing political pressure for some alleviation of the French burden in Indochina.

Strong factors, however, still hold the French to their present commitments. These include: (*a*) the intangible but powerful factor of prestige; (*b*) the knowledge that withdrawal from Indochina would have repercussions elsewhere in the French Union; (*c*) the concern over the fate of French nationals and investments in Indochina; (*d*) the official feeling that no settlement with the VietMinh or with Communist China could be achieved that would reserve any French interests in Indochina; and (*e*) the physical and technical difficulties of a withdrawal operation.

On balance it appears probable that the French will continue the effort to maintain their position in Indochina, but will attempt to alleviate their burden by insisting that the U.S. undertake an increased share of financial responsibility for the defense of the area. The French may, in due course, also press for U.S. armed assistance, either directly, or through the UN, and may also press for U.S. or international support. The French will probably attempt to convince the U.S. that the alternatives to U.S. assumption of an important share of at least financial support for the Indochina operation will be either French withdrawal, or a negotiated settlement with the VietMinh which would be tantamount to acceptance of a Communist Indochina. It is, however, quite possible that if the French are unsuccessful in securing greater U.S. financial assistance they will in fact seriously consider withdrawal from Indochina, or, as a more likely alternative, will explore the possibilities of extricating themselves as gracefully as possible from their Indochina entanglement through a negotiated settlement with the Communists, following an achievement of a truce similar to that now being sought in Korea.

CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING U.S. ASSUMPTION OF INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY FOR INDOCHINA

Important as the maintenance and development of an anti-communist position in Indochina is to the interests of the U.S., a U.S. decision to undertake greater responsibility in Indochina should be made only in the light of (*a*) the possibility that any U.S. course of action, short of actual employment of U.S. armed forces, may in the long run prove inefficacious; (*b*) the possibility that a marked improvement in the anti-communist position in Indochina which threatened to eliminate the VietMinh might occasion Chinese Communist intervention; (*c*) the possibility that U.S. assumption of responsibility in Indochina might occasion a rapid and extensive loss of interest in the situation on the part of the French; and (*d*) U.S. ability to assume increased burdens in Indochina in view of its present world-wide commitments.

The present situation in Burma and Indonesia illustrates the difficulties which the newly independent countries of Southeast Asia face in developing stable and effective governments even in the absence of Communist military activity. Under the best of circumstances the Associated States of Indochina would encounter major problems in establishing themselves. The presence of a well organized, dynamic, and militarily powerful VietMinh opposition greatly complicates these problems. It is possible that with substantial French and U.S. assistance the new states may eventually succeed. But there can be no guarantee that increased U.S. assistance to and responsibility for Indochina will necessarily stabilize the situation or prevent such deterioration as to eventually face the U.S. with a choice of either employing its own armed forces or accepting Communist domination of the area. On the other hand achievement of stability by the Associated States would mean, in effect, the elimination of the VietMinh and the establishment of anti-communist and Western oriented states on the southern border of Communist China and might also face the U.S. with a choice between use of its own armed forces or abandonment of the area to Communist control. It is doubtful whether the Chinese Communists would believe that they could afford to permit such a development. There would therefore be continuing real danger of Chinese Communist armed intervention in the event that U.S. courses of action in Indochina appeared to be leading to defeat of the VietMinh.

There is also the danger that U.S. assumption of increased responsibility for Indochina might lead directly to French abandonment of responsibility for the area. It is probably accurate to estimate that the main thing which inspires the French to hang on in Indochina is concern for French prestige, and the inability to devise any method for relinquishing Indochina without loss of prestige. To the degree that Indochina were to be accepted as a U.S. responsibility the French might feel that their own prestige was disengaged. A falling off of French will and effort would probably follow almost automatically.

U.S. OBJECTIVES

In the light of the considerations described above, U.S. courses of action with regard to Indochina should be designed to:

(*a*) Enable the French to continue to fulfill French responsibilities for Indochina without sacrificing development of French strength under NATO;
(*b*) Supplement rather than supplant French efforts in Indochina, and minimize any increase of U.S. responsibility for the area;
(*c*) Assist in development of the fullest degree of political and military independence of the Associated States which may be consistent with continuation of French efforts in the area, and assist in the development of stable and competent indigenous governments, strong national armies, and sound economies.
(*d*) Minimize possibilities of Chinese Communist intervention.

POSSIBLE U.S. COURSES OF ACTION

The courses of action which the U.S. might consider following to maintain the Franco-Vietnamese position in Indochina and to prevent deterioration of that position include: (*a*) increase of present types of U.S. assistance; (*b*) assumption of a portion of the French burden by financial assistance to metropolitan France, or by financial assistance to the national armies of Indochina; (*c*) exertion of U.S. influence for a broadening of the base of the governments of Indochina; (*d*) employment of U.S. forces in Indochina; and (*e*) stabilization of the present situation through the achievement of a truce which, *inter alia*, would secure anti-communist Indochinese control of territories now administered by them.

a. Present U.S. assistance to Indochina consists of both military and economic aid. U.S. military assistance in the form of U.S. military equipment and supplies has been an essential factor in the defense of Indochina. The economic program has been directed toward offsetting the military drain on the economy of the Associated States, improving the effectiveness of government services, and providing support for military activities. Both of these programs continue to be essential, and U.S. military and economic assistance of the present type should be continued and increased. Steps should be taken to strengthen the MAAG Mission. Increase of these programs will not, however, go far toward relieving the financial burden of Indochina on the French.

b. The current cost to France of the Indochina military operation is approximately U.S.$1,200,000,000 a year. U.S. assumption of a major portion of these costs might be undertaken either by provision of budgetary assistance to metropolitan France, or by U.S. underwriting of all or part of the costs of the development of the Indochinese national armies, which currently account for some $400,000,000 of French costs in Indochina. If it were estimated to be in U.S. interest to undertake responsibility for a portion of the French costs in Indochina, either of these methods could be used to good effect. Direct budgetary assistance to France would have the advantage of limiting direct U.S. responsibility for the Indochina situation and thus might be better calculated to preserve French will for continuing French efforts in Indochina. Assumption of part or all of the costs of the national Indochinese armies would increase U.S. involvement in Indochina, and would undoubtedly to some degree increase U.S. responsibility for the area. This course of action might, however, be more attractive to the U.S. domestically and thus make U.S. appropriations more feasible. It would give the U.S. a greater voice in a particularly useful sector of Indochinese political and military development, and might be so carried out as to minimize the danger of reducing French interest in Indochina.

c. French political concessions to Indochinese nationalism have been considerable and as of now the Associated States probably have more privileges than they can effectively exercise. The French have not offered the Associated States freedom of choice as to whether they wish to be in or out of the French Union. Such an offer might have some utility as a gesture to Indochinese nationalism but the desirability of such a French move, from the point of view of the U.S., depends almost completely on whether or not it would result in a slackening of French will to carry on the defense of Indochina. At present it appears inadvisable for the U.S. to exert its influence to secure such an offer from the French.

The U.S., however, might usefully exert its influence to induce the French and the new States to move towards a broadening of the present overly narrow base of the new governments. In the key area of Vietnam the present government represents primarily the members of a small, relatively pro-French, faction. Important political groups such as the Dai Viets, and Cao Daists, are not adequately represented in the cabinet or government. Without U.S. assumption of major responsibility for Indochina it must be estimated that U.S. influence in the political developments of the area will necessarily remain to some degree limited, but the considerable political influence that the U.S. does possess might well be directed toward the development of governments in Indochina which adequately represent all non-Communist groups.

d. The Chinese Communists have demonstrated in Korea their sensitivity to the presence of U.S. forces near their borders and their willingness to accept major risks and casualties to prevent the approach of U.S. forces to the Manchurian frontier. It must be estimated that the Chinese Communists have the same sensitivity about their southern border as they have demonstrated in the case of Manchuria and it is probable therefore that the intervention of U.S. armed forces in Indochina would occasion a full scale Chinese Communist military intervention. The employment of U.S. armed forces in Indochina, without a prior Chinese Communist intervention, would also have the disadvantage of tending to relieve the French of their basic military responsibility for Indochina and thus of providing the French with a possible means of exit from Indochina which might not too greatly involve French prestige. Aside from the dislocation which use of U.S. forces in Indochina would impose upon U.S. military dispositions elsewhere in the world, therefore, there is good reason to consider it inadvisable for the U.S. to employ its own armed forces in Indochina on the assumption, to which this paper is addressed, that Chinese Communist identifiable aggression does not take place.

e. If it is assumed that a truce in Indochina is *ipso facto* desirable it must also be recognized that none of the political prerequisites of a satisfactory truce are present in the situation. Unlike the situation in Korea, the opposing forces do not face each other across a line of battle; to the contrary large territories are only sporadically subjected to the administrative control of either force. As a practical matter it would be virtually impossible to secure agreement on a "cease fire line" and upon the territories which the opposing forces should control and regard as their own. Correlatively, in the circumstances it would be virtually impossible to set up safeguards for any truce, since observation commissions, neutral or otherwise, would have no "front" to patrol. A situation not unlike but even more unsatisfactory than that which obtained in Indonesia from 1947 to 1949 would doubtless develop. Finally, the concession on the part of Franco-Vietnamese forces of any important territory to the Communists would unquestionably be regarded by the Indochinese people as a confession of great weakness and would have a deleterious effect on the political climate of Indochina.

Recommendations

The U.S. should:

1. Continue and increase its military and economic assistance programs for Indochina;

2. Continue to provide substantial financial assistance for the French effort in Indochina either through direct budgetary assistance to France or through assumption of financial responsibility for the Indochinese national armies, or a combination of both.

3. Continue to exert its influence to promote constructive political developments in Indochina, and in particular to promote a broadening of the base of the governments of the Associated States.

4. Continue to stress French responsibility for Indochina and oppose any decrease of French efforts in Indochina.

5. The U.S. should not employ U.S. armed forces in Indochina.

6. The U.S. should not exert its influence for the achievement of a truce in Indochina.

751G.00/3-2552

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Gibson)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 28, 1952.

Subject: Interview with British Ambassador; Secretary's Presentation of Preliminary Views Concerning British Memorandum of March 15th Regarding Indochina

Participants: The Secretary
Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador
Mr. Gibson, PSA

After the customary amenities, the Secretary proceeded to give response to the British memorandum of March 15th, point by point, as outlined in Mr. Allison's guidance memorandum of March 25th. . . .

. . . .

The Ambassador referred to the increasing concern in London with Southeast Asia. H.M.G. is concerned not only with the present precarious situation in the area, a concern which has been greatly accentuated in recent weeks by their suspicions of French intentions in Indochina, but also with the snowballing effects of any action which might follow a further Chinese aggression. The question of Korea is of course related to their concern.

The Ambassador then noted that the last *Ad Hoc* Military Committee's findings were a failure in that they resulted only in the presentation of three parallel sets of views which never met.[1] The time is now fitting, in the opinion of H.M.G., to make a serious effort to reconcile US and UK views. It is therefore requested that we give urgent thought to the following proposal. A politico-military conference be held as soon as possible in which a limited number of British and American military and Foreign Office officials should take part. He spoke of himself, Mr. Matthews, General Bradley and Marshal Elliot.[2] In answer to the Secretary's question he replied that he did not propose that the Joint Chiefs or any other group be brought from London in order to participate. He believes that the conversations should be concerned with the hypothesis that the Chinese Communists would commit an overt aggression in Indochina, that we were resolved to oppose that aggression and that our objective was to combat the aggression itself and not necessarily to overthrow the Chinese Peoples Republic. On that basis we would concern ourselves with the following two considerations: (*a*) the kind of retaliatory action which we are able to take and its expected effectiveness, and (*b*) an assessment of what would be the results of the retaliatory action in bringing the Sino-Soviet pact into operation.

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[1] The report of the *Ad Hoc* Military Committee (appointed by the Tripartite Military Conference of Jan. 11), Feb. 5, is printed in volume XII.

[2] Air Chief Marshal Sir William Elliot, Chairman of the British Joint Supply Mission and British Representative on the Standing Group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The Ambassador stated that H.M.G. believes that any Chinese aggression could be countered not only where it takes place but also, to a *limited* degree, at the base of the enemy's operations in China without bringing the Sino-Soviet pact [3] into operation. The question to be determined, however, arises out of the difference of opinion between the UK and the US as to where that limit is to be found.

The Ambassador emphasized that it is suggested these discussions were to be carried on *without any commitment of any kind by either government.*

In commenting on the Ambassador's suggestion the Secretary noted that the studies of the last *Ad Hoc* Committee appointed by the Tripartite Military Conference had not achieved their purpose because the British participants were hampered by the fact that they gave first consideration to the policy questions behind any proposed military action while the American representatives thought only of the effectiveness of the action without considering policy at all. He said that there had not been enough advance thought concerning the subject on either side.

The Secretary stated in closing that he would make the British proposal known to the appropriate American officials on Monday, March 31st, and hoped to be able to give the Ambassador a prompt reply.

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[3] For text of the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and the Chinese People's Republic, signed at Moscow on Feb. 14, 1950, see United States Treaty Series (UNTS), vol. 226, pp. 5–9 and 12–17, or *American Foreign Policy, 1950–1955: Basic Documents* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1957), vol. II, pp. 2463–2465.

451G.0031/3–2952: Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 29, 1952—8 p. m.

1908. Rptd info Paris 656. Re Leg desp 427, Mar 1.

Leg and STEM reps discussed with Janot, HC Econ Counselor, prospects for April 18 Fr Assoc States trade discussions. Janot just back from two-week visit Paris. We were interested in possibility that conf might afford Fr occasion to give AS some glimpse of gradually increasing freedom of trade in harmony with evolutionary concept in polit field.

Janot replied that, far from affording opportunities for any assurance to AS, if industrial and export interests metropolitan France were unable obtain substantial tariff preferences covering wide range Fr imports into IC, they might initiate press campaign against entire concept metropolitan France spending blood and treasure defend Assoc States from communism. In general, Janot had brought back strong impression that not only man-in-the-street but substantial portion politicans all parties were completely disillusioned and anxious to have France pull out soonest. If press campaign sparked by big interests got underway Janot convinced no Fr Govt wld be able to keep Fr troops in IC and war wld be over within two to three months with IC lost to communism.

According Janot Fr business interests never really accepted final text of bitterly contested Articles 3 and 4 of the Pau Convention on foreign commerce (Leg desp 616, April 11, page 21)[1] and have maintained their support IC War only in hope that negots based Article 4 this convention wld result in giving them substantial trade preferences. Janot aware such preferences might be harmful to development Fr trade with Japan. He hopes, however, both Fr business interests and Assoc States might be willing accept compromise based on preferential margins being gradually reduced in the future. Janot fearful however, Cambodia may use occasion to reopen entire question of quadripartite control over customs and *regies*.

Another object of Janot's visit was to press his suggestion for transformation of Fr auth hereby substituting Embassy (or equivalent without the name) with attached mil and econ missions, for High Comm Secretariat which exists in form and numbers substantially as it did in colonial days.

Comment: We endorse Janot's idea for Embassy: It is one of things Fr have in their power to do which wld go far to remove ingrained Viet suspicion without materially affecting Fr interest. Doubtful, however, if Fr Govt on Letourneau's advice will do any such thing.

Important Fr industrial financial interests led by Bank of IC have undoubtedly been influential in maintaining Fr effort. If metropolitan interests are not appeased at forthcoming talks quite possible undesirable repercussions on IC effort may result.

Leg believes Janot pessimistic forecasts not attempt blackmail US into acceptance metropolitan Fr position or into urging AS to accept it, but is honest fear adverse consequences to common effort fight communism. If conf lays down a tight system of preferences constricting

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[1] Despatch 616 from Saigon, Apr. 11, 1951, transmitting information on arrangements regulating economic relations between France and the Associated States, is not printed. (651.51G/4–1151)

IC trading area and opportunities unduly, development of a viable middle class in these countries will be deferred, together with the rise of stable polit institutions derived from a healthy middle class. If France able prevail on Assoc States to accept any arrangement which in essence wld seek to perpetuate Fr econ hegemony over Assoc States econ, Bao Dai Govt wld be weakened in eyes both its own adherents as well as fence-sitters. Thus, same vicious cycle which underlies polit development dogs econ. Because of nature of home support for IC war, and need to develop cohesive Fr Union, Fr seem able to continue here only on terms which make it difficult for them to succeed.

Leg wld appreciate Paris assessment Janot's somewhat alarmist statement.

We assume that when US can properly offer its views it wld probably urge both sides to compromise.

HEATH

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Paris Correspondence"

The Counselor of Embassy in France (Bonsal) to the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Lacy)

PERSONAL AND SECRET PARIS, March 31, 1952.

DEAR BILL: The other day I gave a small luncheon for Offroy [1] who is going out to Saigon as Diplomatic Adviser to the High Commissioner (the others were Paul Sturm, Phil Sprouse [2] and Roux who, we all hope, will take Baeyens' place in charge of Far Eastern affairs in the Foreign Office). We were all most favorably impressed by Offroy. I believe that he will be cooperative and intelligent. As you may remember, he was Bidault's [3] *chef de cabinet* for a good many years and knows a good deal about us from San Francisco in 1945 on.

Offroy spoke in serious, and, I thought, plausible terms about the decline in morale in Indochina. He referred to recent military difficulties as well as to the increasing consciousness in France of the degree to which the burden in Indochina is paralyzing France's efforts to play her part in the defense of Western Europe. He said that the exchange of letters between the military in Indochina and their relatives and friends in France was producing and emphasizing increasingly unfavorable reactions.

He also referred to the effect of this growth of pessimism upon the spirit of the politicians and people of Viet Nam upon whom we in theory rely to produce the "situation of strength" which will in some unpredictable future permit us to cut our commitments in Indochina. The only remedy which Offroy proposed was a *ringing* declaration by the U.S. concerning our determination to support the French and Vietnamese in their struggle. I passed this one off by referring to what we have already done and said and by then suggesting that one of the most helpful current developments could well be the appointment by the French of a worthy successor to General de Lattre as High Commissioner. Offroy did not give on this one, i.e. he did not reveal to us the Government's decision—a decision which we expect to hear about in the very near future.

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[1] Raymond Offroy.

[2] Philip D. Sprouse, First Secretary of the Embassy in France.

[3] Georges Bidault, former Premier and Foreign Minister; Minister of Defense in the governments of René Pleven and Edgar Faure, August 1951–February 1952.

All this, I know, adds very little, if anything, to your knowledge of this situation. I am writing you about it to stress my conviction that, while from the financial and supply point of view there is no immediate anticipation of any change in the continued bearing by the French of their Indochinese burden, the situation nevertheless is changing for the worse from the psychological aspect. And that, in a sense, leads us to the very crux of the whole problem. If the IC effort is to be anything more than a holding operation, a climate of confidence must be created—and that means among the Vietnamese, French and Americans. Such confidence does not seem to exist here and, from the reports reaching us from Saigon and on the basis of the accomplishments of the Huu Government to date, there seems to be *at least* a partial lack of confidence in Indochina. You are better able than I to estimate the degree of confidence in Washington.

But, how to create this confidence? It seems to me that, if we continue to look at the problem as merely one of continued appropriations for and deliveries of military and economic aid, we can expect it to be simply a holding operation. As long as the Chinese Communists sit on the other side of the border and feed in the ingredients necessary to a continuation of the Vietminh rebellion, there seems to be no hope of a purely military decision. This, in my opinion, serves to emphasize the inextricably woven pattern of the politico-military aspects of the situation. Certainly there can be no confidence without the military security which would reduce the Vietminh threat. But that alone is not enough and never will be, unless we are willing to throw in overwhelming forces to aid the French and stay until the job is done. I take it that such a course of action is not even worthy of consideration, given present world conditions. We must, therefore, behind the screen of military protection find some means of building up confidence which would increase the effectiveness both of the Vietnamese Government and of its national army. There certainly seems to be some kind of mystique behind the Vietminh which makes its troops, who are also "Vietnamese", continue the fight and create the uneasiness among the native people which results in less than full support of the Huu Government and creates attentism.

In searching for the means by which we can build up this confidence, the first thing that comes to my mind—and this is not a new idea by any means—is the long range outcome to all this effort. Given the present state of mind of Asiatics and the state of world affairs in terms of the strength of the Occident, is there any reason to believe that a Vietnamese Government strong enough to make a decisive contribution to the effort against the Communist-led rebellion will ever be willing to settle at the end of the battle for anything less than complete independence or, at best, a status comparable to that of India or Pakistan? Have we, and more importantly, have the French thought this through to the end? They, and we, speak of the creation and building up of a Vietnamese national army as a means of obtaining the repatriation of French forces in Indochina to the Metropole, where they can make the essential contribution to the rearmament effort in Europe. If the French are to bring back a sizable portion of their forces now in Indochina, it will flow either from the success of the Vietnamese forces or from a military disaster ending in their eviction. In either case the French are faced in the long run with a dynamic Vietnamese Government or a Communist Vietminh regime. If these assumptions have any validity—and I am laying aside the assumption that the whole thing is only a holding operation, since that is defeatist—then the French Government should face up to the long range end result.

I know that in doing this they face the ever present problem of how to justify the French effort in Indochina if it is only in order to hand over the country to the Vietnamese when it is all over. There is the vital question whether the National Assembly would have any heart for a contribution of French funds and blood if that was the only end in sight. There is also the important question of the effect of such action on the rest of the French Union, particularly North Africa. These two aspects of the problem—that is, the difficulty of obtaining from the National Assembly the continued necessary appropriations and the possible effect on North Africa—may represent insurmountable obstacles.

It seems to me that we have the following alternatives (there may be others): (1) The French withdraw, cut their losses and have Ho Chi-minh take over immediately. (2) The French hang on with our aid in a holding operation, frankly recognized as such, thus continuing the heavy drain financially and militarily, accompanied by the risk that at some point the burden becomes unbearable and they are forced to withdraw. If it is a holding operation, it becomes worthwhile only as an operation against the day when World War III breaks, at which time they might withdraw in an effort to save what forces they could for use elsewhere. In either case the French are finished in Indochina. (3) The French face up to the probability that the only way they can ease their burden is by the creation of native forces which will allow a partial French withdrawal and will bring about a greater and more effective Vietnamese effort. If this policy (which is that now being tried by the French Government if their own words are to be believed) is followed to its ultimate end and *is successful*, we will have a native government which will be in a position to face up to the French and perhaps tell them in effect "so sorry, this our garden now" (to paraphrase Ogden Nash). If the French are reluctant, they might get pushed out and thereby end the possibility of any kind of understanding with the Vietnamese. Here again, the end result is the end of France in Indochina.

Against the background of the foregoing, it seems to me that the French might well be asked what their view of the end result is and what they are prepared to do about it. If we invite Letourneau to the States and if we have tripartite talks on Indochina, we might ask this very question. The French Government could do much worse than realize the probable end results and then tell the Vietnamese, both privately and publicly, that when the bloodshed is over and the Vietminh rebellion is ended, the Vietnamese will be allowed to make their own choice—to remain in the French Union or to become completely independent. There is inevitably the risk that they might choose the latter, but if they, in the face of a hostile Communist China, decided that membership within the French Union had its advantages (don't forget that one of France's commitments in the constitution is to defend the French Union), then France and the free world would have gained. In the interim, the attentists would no longer have an excuse for attentism on the grounds that the French had no aim other than to maintain their control. It would provide an answer to the Nehrus of this world. And, the French might then save something from the ruins in the investment field, which would not otherwise be the case. In any event the French should cease bothering about minor unimportant items, such as, the status of Vietnamese representation at Paris, the Palace at Saigon et cetera, and concentrate on the major military and economic questions. That all is not well is shown by Col. The's revolt, the desertion of Thanh in Cambodia and the sideline sitting of men like ex-Governors Tri and Chao [*Giao*].[4] The French have not convinced enough Indochinese that the real enemies are Ho Chi-minh and the Chinese Communists.

Obviously, if we discuss the Indochinese situation with the French on a basis involving an eventual free decision by the Indochinese themselves as to whether they will stay in the French Union or not and if we urge the need for the availability of such a free decision to the Indochinese themselves as an element in the creation of the situation of strength which will keep Indochina in the free world at an eventual minimum of cost to France and the U.S., we invite the French to point out that since the contemplated end-result is of interest to the free world as a whole rather than specifically to the French Union, the supply of means for the achieving of that result should be the responsibility of the French Union only to the extent that that Union is also a member of the free world. In other words, the French might well argue for an internationalization of the conflict (meaning an international sharing of the burden), the practical effect of which would be greatly to increase our contribution in money and equipment, it being presumably understood that we could make no manpower contribution (except perhaps air) and that the British, the only other world power active in SEA, are too involved in Malaya and elsewhere to be in a position to make any real contribution, if, indeed, they can make any at all. Are we ready to assume this added responsibility? If we are, we can urge the French along the path we think is the right one; if we are not, we had probably better keep quiet.

To return from conjecture to realities, I do not pretend to try to reconcile the divergent accounts which we receive of the military situation. I am inclined myself to believe that in spite of the increased strength of the enemy over the past 12 to 18 months there is substance in the French official statement of their ability to hold the line for the present. Nevertheless that ability is certainly going to be affected by the loss of confidence which I have tried to illustrate by reference to Offroy's conversation. In other words, we haven't, in my judgment, very much time in which to decide on our own future actions in relation to Indochina. I know that this is now being given earnest consideration in Washington.

Under present conditions the odds seem to be against a Chinese overt invasion but there is the constant influx of matériel, of little bulk perhaps but of great immediate value in actual combat, which the Chinese Communists can send across the border in never ending streams. We are pretty close under present circumstances to the maximum which our friends can put in the field, unless the Vietnamese national army can be created at a more rapid pace. The situation is one which is dismaying many of our most stalwart friends here. They are, as they have been for a long time, really looking to us for some concrete statement of what we will do in certain eventualities.

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[4] The references are to the armed opposition to the French led by Colonel Trinh Minh The, a dissident leader of the Cao Dai sect; to the defection in early March of Son Ngoc Thanh, an important Cambodian nationalist; and to Nguyen Huu Tri (former Governor of Tonkin) and Pham Van Giao (former Governor of Annam).

This letter has grown well beyond what was originally intended. It represents the views of Phil Sprouse and myself—with most of the drafting Phil's.

With warm regards,

Yours,

PHILIP W. BONSAL

751G.11/4–452 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL

SAIGON, April 4, 1952—4 p. m.

1937. Rptd info Paris 660. Acting High Commissioner Gautier confirmed that Bao Dai will make a three or four week visit to France but presumably not until after Letourneau's arrival later this month. Bao Dai indicated to me one purpose of the trip was for medical treatment and examination. He complains of a recurrent eye infection which impairs his sight for a day or two every ten days, of dysentery and chronic malaria which returns occasionally. There are probably some psychosomatic factors in his complaints.

Bao Dai told Gautier he wld like to be able to go two or three times a year to France if he cld go without publicity. Gautier said he thought the idea was not bad since it wld put Bao Dai in touch with his family and perhaps lead to an improvement in the relations with the Empress which might result in the latter's return to Vietnam. The Fr and many Vietnamese feel that the presence of the Empress here wld have an excellent political effect, stimulate Bao Dai to more public activity and wld lessen the influence of certain of his entourage who encourage him in his present quasi-seclusion. I share this view. Binh[1] new Govt [*Gov*] of North Vietnam tells me the Empress will return for Bao Dai's 40th birthday next October but that her stay wld probably not be prolonged. The Empress sister, the Baroness Didelot who has been spending several months here tells me she has been trying to prevail on "her august brother-in-law" to have the Empress and family return.

HEATH

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[1] Pham Van Binh.

751G.5/4–552 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 5, 1952—3 p. m.

1948. Leg refers to NIE–35/1 [1] just received. I desire to record that my opinion and the majority of our qualified observers here, including Gen Brink, that the estimate is slightly over-pessimistic. We do not believe that thru mid-1952 the probable outlook in IC is one of gradual deterioration of the Franco-Viets milit position. We believe that the Franco-Viets forces will maintain and possibly slightly improve their present position against the VM. The British Min here tells me that is their estimate also. We doubt the VM will make "some territorial gains" by mid-year. Pls note that above estimate extends only to first half of 1952, period which is already half over and is also based on the by no means firm supposition that Chinese will not invade in force during next three months.

I wld not at this date venture to make predictions respecting milit situation during second half 1952.

HEATH

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[1] Dated Mar. 3, p. 53.

651.51G/4–852 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn)[1] to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, April 8, 1952—5 p. m.

6173. Rptd info Saigon 364 London unn. Saigon tel 1857, Mar 23 [*24*], rptd Paris unn.[2]

In para number 9 reftel Saigon raises perennial and to date unanswered question: What wld be the effect French Govt statement that at some future date (either named or described as at end hostilities) Assoc States wld be given choice remaining in Fr Union or complete independence or that at this future date there wld be complete revamping March 8 accords and Pau conf resolutions to achieve revision status Assoc States?

While it is obviously impossible to give direct and clear-cut answer to this ques, it is possible to set forth some of the factors involved.

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[1] James Clement Dunn succeeded David K. E. Bruce as Ambassador in France on Mar. 27, 1952.

[2] In telegram 1857 from Saigon, Mar. 24, not printed, Minister Heath addressed the question of encouraging the Philippines to recognize the Associated States of Indochina and discussed statements which might be made by France to promote Asian acceptance of the Associated States as independent entities. Paragraph 9 read in part as follows: "Embassy Paris might suggest limits it [the French Government] cld go without losing parliamentary majorities essential to IC defense budgets. We suggest possibility that statement clearing air might consolidate rather than weaken majority." (751G.02/4–2452)

If a Fr Govt cld be prevailed upon to make such a statement, particularly if it promised choice of complete independence for Assoc States at such and such a date, ques wld then arise whether Nat Assembly and Fr public opinion wld any longer be prepared support continued drain in manpower and money for effort, end result of which wld be to cut IC loose from metropole. If, however, such a statement cld be related to an "internationalization" of IC problem, that is, in absence Chi attack and UN action parallel to that in Korea, an internatl sharing of and responsibility for burden, Nat Assembly and Fr public reaction might be different. Such "internationalization" cld only flow from a much greater US participation thru increased mil, econ and fin aid and might lead to Fr expectation also of direct US mil participation in conflict. In brief, such "internationalization" of burden wld mean US assumption of undetermined share as there are no other possibilities in sight unless Australia and New Zealand might be persuaded in self-interest to contribute. Such contribution wld likely be little more than token at best. UK responsibilities Malaya and Middle East militate against any appreciable Brit contrib.

On other hand, effect such statement among elements in IC seems to be equally difficult to appraise with real certainty. Logically, it should cut ground out from under feet Viet Minh and cause ralliement to Assoc States non-Commie elements now supporting Ho Chi-Minh. It shld cause attentistes to throw in their lot with Assoc States Govts. It shld provide answer to Nehru and other Asian leaders and give grounds for recognition Assoc States Govts. But, wld it do these things and, if it did, wld these results be sufficiently decisive to bring about eventually virtual elimination Viet Minh as serious threat? Para 8 reftel does not indicate prospects are particularly bright for mere evolutionary type statement.[3]

In summary, it seems probable Fr Govt wld not be willing make statement re choice complete independence unless it cld demonstrate to Parliamentary and public opinion that burden IC conflict wld no longer be borne largely by France. It also seems probable that advantages wld flow to cause of free world thru issuance such statement because of its effect both within Assoc States and elsewhere in Asia, but degree to which these advantages wld play decisive part is not susceptible of accurate appraisal from here. It can only be said, with some degree of certainty, that moral position France and her free world supporters Assoc States wld in eyes Asiatics be placed in much better light.

DUNN

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[3] Paragraph 8 of telegram 1857 read as follows: "We do not believe such evolutionary statement will make much dent on VM or transform situation; at best, it might clear way for installation of Associated States govts with more dynamism and take some wind out of stubborn natl sails." (751G.02/4-2452)

851G.00/4-952 : Despatch

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

[Extracts]

CONFIDENTIAL
No. 495

SAIGON, April 9, 1952.

Ref: Legdes 485, Documents relating to the Organization of Indochina's Rice Export Trade.[2]

Subject: French Economic Interests in the Economies of the Associated States.

For MSA, Agriculture, Treasury, and Commerce in addition to any other usual addressees.

SUMMARY

Introduction

French and Vietnamese public opinion on issue of continued French domination of Indochinese economy. This may affect forthcoming Paris trade talks between Associated States and France.

Companion studies

On basic governmental economic controls: on transfer of power agreements and on foreign trade, prices, exchange, taxes, and credit policy. These need to be supplemented by present study of private economic power nucleuses.

French economic interests in Indochina

Conclusions drawn from Enclosures 3, 4, and 5. French enterprises hold almost all key positions in Indochina's economy. Indochinese forcible entry into French private industries forbidden by Agreements between Associated States and France.

Business organization and restrictive trade practices

Bank of Indochina and three other "dominant" concerns control to some extent 119 companies. In addition strong private trade associations control all rice exports and all petroleum imports.

Capital and profits

Present French private investments estimated at roughly 1.7 billion 1952 dollars. Profits on declared capital were very high during 1950, but percentage figures can only be used with the greatest caution.

Conclusions

Recommendations

. . . .

Conclusions

1. French enterprises together with a few foreign firms control most of the key points of the Indochinese economy. They may have been influential in supporting the Metropolitan French Government's determination in the years after 1945 to maintain the French presence in Indochina.

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[1] The eight enclosures to this document are not printed.

[2] Despatch 485 from Saigon, Apr. 9, not printed, transmitted information on the organization of the Indochinese rice export trade. (851G.2317/4-952)

2. The Bank of Indochina occupies an important position among French enterprises not only as a direct investor in individual enterprises, but because of its interests in four or five of the principal holding or managing firms which in turn have certain inter-locking director relations among themselves.

3. Segments of the Indochinese economy, for instance rice exports and petroleum product imports, are strictly controlled by what amount to monopolistic trade associations.

4. Profits of most French firms in the controlled areas were substantial in 1950—both in absolute terms and relative at least to declared capital.

5. There has been surprisingly little criticism of French economic power in Indochina as compared to French political power. Possibly this may be due to censorship, but more probably to the fact that, except for a very small group of progressive Vietnamese businessmen, political reforms seem generally both more popular and more urgent than economic reforms. French domination of business has thus possibly not been contested because the Vietnamese have been putting first things first, arguing for a constitution and political liberties. It is possible also, that the average Vietnamese had simply expected a better distribution of this world's goods to follow somewhat automatically from "independence" as embodied in the March 8 Agreements. When this does not happen, it is logical to expect that he will begin to transfer his efforts to the economic field. Criticism of France's economic hegemony over Indochina can, therefore, be expected to grow.

Recommendations

The Legation has gone almost as far as it can with information available in Saigon, without arousing local resentment or suspicion, to collect and present the extent of, and the personalities engaged in, French enterprises in Indochina. If the Department and the Embassy in Paris agree with the Legation that the importance of these enterprises have been demonstrated to be sufficiently significant to warrant further study, it would appear that such investigations must be primarily concentrated in Paris. For evidently it is in the hands of a relatively few French business men in Paris that the centers of economic power in Indochina presently lie. In any event, however, if the concentration of economic power over Indochina is found to be as suggested herein, it is recommended that:

1. The United States find some tactful way—possibly through American business circles in Paris?—of encouraging those French business elements which would like to admit Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians to a greater share in the economy of Indochina.

2. These same interests be encouraged to reinvest a greater part of their demonstrably high profits in the Associated States.

3. The attitudes of the business circles mentioned in this despatch be kept under review with the object, if possible, of forestalling possible pressure upon their part to influence members of the National Assembly or of the press against continuance of the war in Indochina.

In short, our object would appear to be to influence these interests to assist rather than, potentially, to frustrate United States objectives in Indochina; i.e., (1) to promote the continuance of French participation in the unpopular Indochinese war and (2) to promote the development of strong national governments as well as substantial middle-class groups in the Associated States without which the States will continue to be liabilities rather than real assets to the evolving French Union as a whole.

Action

A carbon copy of this despatch is being transmitted directly to the Embassy in Paris. It would be appreciated if an additional copy could be sent to that Embassy together with a copy to the Legations in Phnom Penh and Vientiane and to the Consulate in Hanoi, and three copies to the Legation in Saigon. Irrespective of what action may be taken in connection with the above recommendations, the Legation would greatly appreciate it if any information available regarding the membership and general position of the Union des Syndicats Professionels Indochinois and the Union Intersyndicale de l'Industrie d'Outre-Mer, both of which have their headquarters in Paris could be forwarded to Saigon.

DONALD R. HEATH

751G.00/4-2252: Despatch

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State[1]

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, April 22, 1952.

No. 2784

Subject: Minister of Associated States' Statements in National Assembly Debate on Indochina

The Embassy encloses the text, as reported in the *Journal Officiel*, of the statements made by Mr. Jean Letourneau, Minister of State charged with Relations with the Associated States,[2] during the debate in the National Assembly on April 10, 1952 on the question of regularizing supplementary 1951 budgetary appropriations for Indochina.[3] As stated in the Embassy's telegram No. 6281 of April 11, 1952 (repeated to the Legation at Saigon as No. 369 and the Embassy at

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[1] A copy of this despatch was transmitted to the Legation at Saigon.

[2] Not printed.

[3] For the record of the proceedings under reference, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1952, Débats*, pp. 2092 ff.

London unnumbered),[4] the National Assembly approved the regularization of these appropriations by a vote of 403 to 100, with only the Communist Party in opposition.

The portions of Mr. Letourneau's statements of chief interest are those dealing with the general question of French policy in Indochina, with particular reference to the question of the possibility of negotiation with Ho Chi-minh. He also attempted to answer some of the questions which had been raised by Mr. Pineau (Socialist),[5] Chairman of the Subcommittee of the National Assembly's Committee of National Defense which undertook a mission to Indochina in January 1952. These questions were raised by Mr. Pineau at the National Assembly debate of April 9, who spoke as a special reporter of the National Assembly's Finance committee and set forth the essential points of the report drawn up by this parliamentary mission (see the Embassy's telegram No. 6256 of April 10, 1952, repeated to the Legation at Saigon as No. 368 and to the Embassy at London unnumbered).[6] Mr. Letourneau also dealt with the international aspects of the Indochina problem.

French Policy in Indochina

Mr. Letourneau said that he had accepted the formula under which he would proceed to Indochina as a Resident Minister[7] as long as might be necessary but that this formula was not in itself a solution. He emphasized that one of his reasons for accepting such a status was the desire to avoid any thought that French policy in Indochina was going to change. He said that there had been a definite continuity in French policy in Indochina, that it had remained unchanged during his tenure of office and that this same policy had existed even before that time. If there were no peace in Indochina, it was neither the fault of the French Government nor of the men responsible for French policy, as there was no official bearing the responsibilities he now bore who would not make every effort to seek a solution, one which would be acceptable for the national conscience of the country and capable of ending the conflict. Somewhat enigmatically, he pointed out that there would be a chance of succeeding only if actions that were taken were taken without publicity since if publicity were given to all the contacts and conversations which have taken place, most of them without success, they would be without end result.

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[4] Not printed.

[5] Christian Pineau, a prominent member of the Socialist Party; former minister.

[6] Telegram 6256 from Paris, reporting on Pineau's remarks in the National Assembly, is not printed. (751.21/4–1052)

[7] On Apr. 1, Letourneau had been appointed High Commissioner in Indochina, while retaining his cabinet position of Minister for the Associated States. General Raoul Salan, Acting Commander in Chief of French Union Forces in Indochina, was confirmed as permanent commander.

He warned the Socialist Party against abstention in the vote and said that no solution was possible in Indochina unless it was clearly stated that France would remain there as long as necessary. He said that the worst catastrophe for France is the existence of doubt that France would remain and fear that France would tomorrow abandon Indochina. He made clear that the only thing for France to do at present was to hold since it did not have the means of doing otherwise.

He expressed the opinion that France was defending in Indochina an advance outpost of the free world, thereby assisting a considerable number of countries who should be more cognizant of this action. (This statement was applauded on all sides except for the Communist Party.) He added that France's action had permitted her to obtain, in particular from the United States, military and financial aid which was daily becoming more substantial and that France should thank the United States for this assistance. (This statement drew similar applause.) Arguing against the idea of withdrawal from Indochina, Mr. Letourneau said that if France now abandoned Indochina, no one in the free world would believe in France and her promises. He asked what would then become of the French Union and answered his own query by saying there would remain very little.

Question of Negotiations with Ho Chi-minh

Mr. Letourneau said that he had often been asked why an appeal was not made to Ho Chi-minh, why could Ho not be told that France was ready to negotiate. These questioners had said that if Ho Chi-minh did not reply—and they had expressed doubt that he would reply—at least France's conscience would be relieved of a great weight and it would be made clear that France had not sought the fight but that the fight had been imposed upon France. Although Mr. Letourneau's earlier statement regarding secret conversations contained some implication that these conversations might have been directed toward negotiation with Ho Chi-minh, Mr. Letourneau made categorically clear that he was strongly opposed to the idea of seeking negotiations with Ho Chi-minh. He said that he could not follow the foregoing reasoning. He continued that he had on many occasions stressed the French desire for peace, a desire which could not be questioned. He then stated that if France made a solemn appeal to Ho Chi-minh—and he was certain that there would be no reply—it would be an indication that France had forgotten the events associated with the fall of 1946, when the *modus vivendi* established permitted the Vietminh through duplicity and cunning to endanger the security of French troops. He summarized that an appeal to Ho Chi-minh would destroy the morale of the French Expeditionary Corps and create panic among the Indochinese people because they would know from that moment that France was going to abandon them to Ho Chi-minh. He said that to the degree that he believed it necessary to seek every means of ending the conflict to that same degree he warned against any confidence in such an appeal to Ho Chi-minh, as it would have results completely contrary to those that supporters of this thesis were seeking in all honesty and in good faith. (These statements were applauded on the center, right and extreme right and from certain benches on the left.)

Vietnam

Mr. Letourneau reiterated his thesis that France must hold in Indochina, pointing out that this was the view also of the National Assembly's mission in January, and that France must make the necessary effort which would permit the national armies of the Associated States gradually to supplement the French effort. He called for an increased effort on the part of the Associated States. He said that France did not contest their independence and that their first duty was their own effort to preserve this independence. He said that the Vietnamese National Army had given evidence of its value in actual combat and that the national armies, as the late Marshal de Lattre had believed, were a solution to the reduction of the French effort. Mr. Letourneau expressed his intention of carrying out French policy in Indochina with the maximum liberality. He said that the independence of the Associated States must not be questioned and that he intended to implement French policy within the framework of the accords governing their relations with France. He asked that the Associated States be willing to note this and to state that they were defending their independence not against France but with France, thanks to the French presence and French friendship. He warned that the more the Associated States tried to loosen the bonds uniting them to France the more they ran the risk of the loss of their independence.

International

Returning to the Vietminh question, Mr. Letourneau said that it was only through bringing discouragement to the Vietminh that there was a possibility of the latter trying to end the conflict. He expressed the opinion that other than through the development of the National Armies there was no hope or chance, probably not even on the international level. Mr. Letourneau recalled that he had been asked why France's allies should not be requested to take part in the fight. He explained that the present problem is of such a nature that there was little assurance of the reply that would be received. He reminded the Assembly that the posing of the Indochina problem within the framework of the United Nations would appear to some as equivalent to bringing up an internal problem of the French Union. He said that the French Government had, however, discussed the matter with France's allies and had achieved some results in obtaining from them, in fields compatible with French responsibilities, assurances of support, a support which was not of negligible proportions. He said that the French Government had not ceased its efforts to obtain from her friends and allies precise guarantees and commitments in the event of an international war arising from invasion of Tonkin. He said that the French Government would not cease its efforts to obtain extremely formal guarantees in this regard. While he could say nothing of the present state of these conversations, they had made progress since the visit of the late Marshal de Lattre to the United States. He welcomed Mr. Eden's statements regarding the consequences for the aggressor in the event of the aggression in Southeast Asia [8] and expressed the hope that in the weeks to come the French Government would obtain the commitments which the importance of the struggle for the free world gave it the right to seek.

Answers to Mr. Pineau's Queries

Mr. Letourneau said that it was his opinion that 55 billion francs in additional funds would be sufficient for 1952 and that Mr. Pineau had erred when he predicted that 100 billion francs of additional appropriations would be needed. Mr. Letourneau gave as his reasons that so long as there was no sudden change in the military situation, so long as prices remained stable for the items ordered and the pay of the troops continued at the same level, there would be no need for more than the 55 billion francs anticipated. He said that France had no chance, unless by a complete change in military conditions, to be able to make in Indochina a supplementary effort with respect to troop strength. He pointed out that the estimates were based on the maximum expenditures in 1951 when the heaviest fighting had occurred and that France was now witnessing an accelerated pace of United States military aid. He said that telegrams from Saigon gave him constant reports of the number of ships arriving with American matériel and that deliveries were arriving at the desired time.

Referring to Pineau's charge that the French Government had no control over French appropriations for the Associated States National Armies, Mr. Letourneau said that this was not true and that France had absolute control through the French administrative missions' supervision at every stage.

Mr. Letourneau admitted that there had been delays in deliveries from the Metropole but pointed out the difficulties involved in supplying an army 12,000 kilometers from the Metropole. He said that while France was at war in Indochina it was still on a peacetime economy and that he had no right to impose priorities on French private industry. He then went into an explanation of the difficulties accompanying orders for and deliveries of helicopters and barbed wire. He also gave a full explanation of the reasons for the original occupation of Hoa Binh and for the subsequent withdrawal from this point. He explained the progress being made in the restoration of the situation in the Delta area and in pacification in Cochinchina and Annam. He said that Cambodia represented no serious military problem, since there were only small groups of bandits or rebels, but that there was a political problem which at the moment is a source of concern even for the security of the country.

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[8] Reference is presumably to remarks by Foreign Secretary Eden at Columbia University on Jan. 11, described in footnote 8, p. 20.

Conclusions

The French Government has met another test on the Indochina problem in the National Assembly, but this occasion was not a major test and a full-scale debate on Indochina is now expected to take place after the National Assembly reconvenes in late May. Mr. Letourneau's return from Indochina in mid-May is probably related to the expectation of such a debate.

One element of some importance in the debate just concluded was the abstention of the Socialist deputies in the vote despite Mr. Letourneau's warning that doubt cast on French determination to remain in Indochina would have a seriously adverse effect on the French effort. While the Socialist spokesman made clear that the Socialists were not advocating simple withdrawal, he did point to previous Socialist reservations and criticism of French policy in Indochina and emphasized the Socialist desire for peace. He denied that Socialist abstention could be interpreted as an act expressing lack of confidence in the French Expeditionary Corps.

In his statements Mr. Letourneau summed up French policy in Indochina in fairly simple terms: To hold and to build up the National Armies of the Associated States. He made clear that the creation of these armies represented the only means by which the French effort might be reduced. This is, of course, not new but Mr. Letourneau appeared to give considerably increased emphasis to the idea that nothing should be done or said which would indicate any lack of French determination to remain in Indochina.

His strongly expressed opposition to the launching of an appeal for peace to Ho Chi-minh was backed up with sound reasons. He did not, however, say that France would reject Vietminh overtures for negotiations. In fact, Mr. Letourneau did say that only if the Vietminh became discouraged would there be a chance of their seeking ways to end the conflict.

At this juncture the problems facing the French Government in Indochina remain unchanged—those of finding men and money. In an almost unnoticed passage in his statement Mr. Letourneau himself said that there was no chance, unless military conditions changed completely, that France could supplement the number of its troops in Indochina. It is, therefore, to the National Armies that the French Government looks for relief on this score. On the material side the French Government continues to bear the major portion of a burden which has become increasingly heavy, the continued acceptance of which has so far been made possible only through United States assistance supplementing the French effort. The debate just concluded did not endanger the continuation of the previous French policy in Indochina but a more serious test is likely to come when a full scale debate on this major question occurs in the National Assembly after its reconvening in May.

JAMES CLEMENT DUNN

751G.00/4-2252 : Despatch

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 22, 1952.

No. 517

Subject: Tendentious Reference to United States in French Intelligence Report

There is enclosed an excerpt from a letter, dated April 10, 1952,[1] addressed to me by W. Wendell Blancke, American Consul at Hanoi, relating an incident which occurred on April 8 during the course of a call paid on General De Linares, Commander of French Union Forces in North Vietnam, for the purpose of introducing Consul Blancke's successor, Consul Paul Sturm. General De Linares availed himself of the occasion to read to Messrs. Blancke and Sturm an excerpt from his daily intelligence report. This item asserted that Vietnamese in Hanoi and in the region of Phat Diem were alleging that, according to information emanating from American consular authorities, the situation of the French troops in North Vietnam is deteriorating in view of the shortage of military aid and that it is, therefore, possible that French forces would have to be relieved by Vietnamese troops, whereupon American military aid would be again forthcoming. According to Blancke, De Linares treated this report as a joke but with just enough seriousness to indicate that there had better not be any truth in it. Blancke denied that there was any foundation in fact in the reported Vietnamese allegations and reminded General De Linares of the malicious gossip which has been current from time to time.

The incident would appear to the Legation to be of slight importance in itself but is being reported as an indication of the French sensitivity with respect to American activities in the Associated States. Such incidents are likely to reoccur because of the tendency of the French intelligence services to seize on rumors of American desires to advance Vietnamese national aspirations at the expense of France or allegations of American plots to displace the French in Indochina.

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[1] Not printed.

It is our opinion that these occasional incidents should not be given undue emphasis or be permitted to create the impression that suspicion of our motives is general among French officials. In the event of French allegations which have no basis in fact, we should firmly but courteously set the record straight. It is to our mutual interest, however, to minimize such sources of friction and to recognize that most such allegations arise from rumor mongering.

For the Minister:
EDMUND A. GULLION

751G.00/4–2452 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, April 24, 1952—4 p. m.

716. Dept pass Paris, Saigon. Rptd info Paris 242, Saigon 440. Min Heath accompanied by MAAG Chief Gen Brink and First Secy Wellborn [1] arrived Hanoi afternoon Apr 22. Party attended briefing session 6 p. m. at which Linares, obviously jubilant, described encircling tactics used in Operation Polo and success obtained and stated that next day he would issue communiqué declaring VM 98th regiment destroyed in 48-hour period. Statistics given in next following telegram.[2] Linares said documents captured indicated 98th regiment had been instructed by VM High Command to remain fixed in delta for three-fold purpose of recruitment, victualing and harassing Franco-Viets, but had disobeyed orders and in attempting withdraw northward had fallen into skillfully closed trap. Additional documents, he said, indicated growing dissatisfaction on part VMs with extent of support offered them by delta populations.

At Linares' invitation party proceeded morning Apr 23 to Bacninh in company with Gov Binh for briefing session at Gen Cogny's [3] CP, thence by jeep to visit two VM villages destroyed in course of operation. These were Vu-Duong and Tracnyiet, approx 10 to 12 miles southeast Bacninh and just north of Canal des Rapides. Both villages long occupied by VM and honeycombed with underground passages. Linares especially wished Brink to see these entrenchments in support former's urgent request for additional supplies 155 MM ammunition and aerial bombs with delayed action fuses. Entrenchments at Vu-Duong appeared largely intact, while Tracnyiet, attacked by ordinary aerial bombs, was pulverized. To the non-professional eye fortifications, while complex and ingenious, appeared hardly offer resistance greater than could be overcome by bombs such as those used at Tracnyiet. At CP of Col de Castries, Commander of one GM taking part in operations party observed piles of captured munitions, on the whole a sorry lot of hardware, and groups of prisoners hardly more impressive.

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[1] Alfred T. Wellborn, First Secretary of the Legation at Saigon.

[2] Not printed.

[3] General René Cogny, a French divisional task force commander in North Vietnam.

Comment: Polo has been received by Letourneau as a good omen for the success of his mission and has given the military command welcome encouragement. Gov Binh was invited join inspection tour so Linares could impress him with nature and extent of administrative job indispensable as follow-up to mil operations. Said that as Binh and his services took over and consolidated govt position in liberated areas, mil command would be enabled move forces onto further operations and Linares could eventually repatriate his non-Viet troops from IC. Binh remained full of goodwill but appeared overwhelmed by magnitude of task as this was brought home to him in the ruins and stinks of Tracnyiet.

STURM

780.5/4–2452 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 24, 1952—6 : 36 p. m.

6279. Fr Amb called on Asst Sec FE Apr 22 to discuss fol matters relating to IC and SEA:

1. Recommendations of Tripartite *Ad Hoc* Mil Comite.[2] Fr Amb identified three conclusions of *Ad Hoc* Comite as of immed interest to his govt: (a) Recognition of Tonkin and IC as key to the defense of SEA; (b) Tripartite mil courses of action requisite to defense of IC and SEA in event Chi invasion; (c) question of transmitting to Peiping warning from US, Brit and Fr of tripartite retaliation on China in event Chi aggression SEA. Fr Amb stated his govt eager to

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[1] Drafted by Lacy of PSA. Also sent to London as telegram 5450, to Moscow as 734, and to Saigon as 1601.

[2] The report of the *Ad Hoc* Military Committee, dated Feb. 5, is included in documentation on general policies of the United States with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII.

learn views of US govt on these three points and considered it essential that further tripartite conversations on highest military level take place soonest.

2. IC national armies. Fr Amb emphasized his govt's views that satisfactory formation, equipment and commitment to action of IC national armies "brightest light on horizon" in IC; that Fr financial and manpower burden in connection national armies was growing steadily more difficult for Fr to bear in view of Fr Union forces action in IC as well as Fr contribution NATO; and that he hoped US Govt, recognizing importance national armies, wld continue to make maximum contribution to their formation, equipment and maintenance.

In respect of (1) above Asst Sec FE emphasized that US shared Fr estimate importance Tonkin and IC not only to defense SEA but also to successful defense free Asia from further communist domination. In this connection Asst Sec FE pointed out precarious position Japan in the event SEA fell into Commie hands. As for course of action in event Chi invasion IC, Asst Sec FE pointed out this matter receiving most urgent consideration on highest govt levels and that he thought it probable that in very near future US will have completed studies its capabilities to an extent which will make it possible for US to discuss time and place of further tripartite discussions. Asst Sec FE discussed possibility some action which might deter Chi aggression and pointed out that a warning to Peiping need not and shld not specify time, place or manner of retaliation shld the warning go unheeded. Fr Amb indicated his agreement.

Asst Sec FE observed this connection that it seemed apparent from report of *Ad Hoc* Comite that in some important particulars such as retaliation on Chi, Brit and to a lesser extent Fr were not prepared to go as far as US. Fr Amb replied that his govt particularly eager that no course of action be pursued which wld result in loss of territory, i.e. Tonkin which it was their avowed purpose to defend. Asst Sec FE emphasized that US objective was successfully to defend and retain SEA of course including Tonkin; he added that it was entirely possible that shld retaliation on China become necessary it might be impossible to limit military action to the locality in which the aggression took place. Fr Amb agreed.

In respect of (2) above Asst Sec FE stated that US continued as it had in the past to regard success IC national army project as essential to final solution IC problem.

Fr Amb asked if Dept had engaged recently in conversations with Brit on matters analogous to foregoing. Asst Sec FE replied no such conversations had taken place for some several weeks but that Dept was aware of Brit desire to continue tripartite conversations on the defense of SEA soonest.

ACHESON

751G.5/5–152

The Secretary of Defense (Lovett) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 1 May 1952.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: On March 5 the National Security Council called for the preparation of a Report on the United States Courses of Action in Southeast Asia to counter continued deterioration of the existing situation in the absence of identifiable Communist aggression.[1] Thereafter, we were handed informally a State Department draft dated March 27 dealing with the Indochinese section of the National Security Council Report.[2] This has been given careful consideration within the Defense Department.

There appears to be some difference in point of view between our two Departments and it seems to me that it might be useful for us to sit down together to canvass the situation and to see whether we cannot agree on the general lines of a policy.

In order that you may know in advance the direction which our thinking is taking on this question, I am enclosing memoranda which I have received from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Secretaries, together with a memorandum which is intended to set out in outline form an affirmative counterproposal.

I am sure you will agree with me that under present circumstances we should tackle the Southeast Asian problem urgently, and reach an early decision in the National Security Council. I believe that an early discussion between us would contribute to that objective.

Sincerely yours, ROBERT A. LOVETT

[Enclosure 1]

Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Lovett)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 18 April 1952.

Subject: Department of State Draft Paper on "Indochina".

1. In accordance with the request contained in your memorandum dated 4 April 1952,[3] the Joint Chiefs of Staff have studied the Department of State draft paper, dated 27 March 1952, on "Indochina",

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[1] Reference is to NSC Action No. 614 of Mar. 5, which is described in footnote 5, p. 80. For additional documentation on interdepartmental consideration of the problem of the defense of Southeast Asia, including information on the evolution of the NSC 124 series on U.S. objectives and courses of action with respect to Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, see the compilation on general U.S. policies with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII.

[2] For the State Department draft, see p. 82.

[3] Not found in Department of State files.

which was attached thereto. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, from the military point of view, have no objections to the broad recommendations in this Department of State draft paper. They would point out, however, that these recommendations do not offer a new approach to the solution of the problems of Indochina; rather, the paper suggests certain variations in methods together with an unspecified increase in the scope and pace of the courses of action now being implemented under current United States policies. Consequently, the degree of success to be anticipated from these extensions of present policy will in a large measure depend upon the promptness and vigor with which they are prosecuted. In connection with the foregoing, the Joint Chiefs of Staff request opportunity to comment in advance of decision involving any marked changes in methods of implementation of military measures for Indochina.

2. It is noted that whereas current policy for Indochina (NSC 48/5)[4] includes promotion of international support for the three Associated States, subject paper does not include the promotion of such international support among its recommendations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that such efforts should be continued and intensified, and further that, if a United Nations flavor can be achieved for such support, the stigma of colonialism attached to unilateral efforts might in some degree be removed.

3. While agreeing that introduction of U.S. armed forces into Indochina might occasion overt Communist Chinese intervention, and also that this is otherwise undesirable as a U.S. course of action, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would point out that naval and air forces could be employed in the general vicinity without incurring the disadvantages which would attend the introduction of ground forces. Any Western show of force would in some measure offset the psychological advantage on the Communist side which is inherent in the relative nearness and armed strength of Communist China. For this reason, and in view of the dependence of the countries of Southeast Asia on the sea, the presence of U.S. naval forces could have an important effect as a deterrent to the internal spread of Communism.

4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, while in agreement with the conclusion in subject paper that on balance it appears probable the French will continue the effort to maintain their position in Indochina, would suggest, nevertheless, that consideration be given to U.S. courses of action in the event of voluntary French withdrawal.

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[4] For text of NSC 48/5, "United States Objectives, Policies and Courses of Action in Asia," dated May 17, 1951, and approved by the President the same day, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 33.

5. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, from the military point of view, would suggest the following changes to the *Analysis* of the subject paper:

a. Delete the second sentence in the first part of subparagraph *a* under the heading IMPORTANCE OF INDOCHINA, which reads as follows:

> "It is also generally accepted that in case of Communist occupation of Tonkin there is no other militarily defensible position for the West north of the Isthmus of Kra."

Reason: The statement is too categorical inasmuch as there are other military positions in the relatively extensive area between Tonkin and the Isthmus of Kra where under various circumstances resistance could be offered.

b. Change the last sentence of the second part of subparagraph *a* under the heading IMPORTANCE OF INDOCHINA, to read (changes indicated in the usual manner):[5]

> "It is possible therefore that in spite of the theoretical military defensibility of Malaya at the Kra, the loss of Indochina ~~would in fact~~ could lead to the loss to the Communist bloc of the entire Southeast Asia mainland, and eventually Indonesia as well."

Reason: What the loss of Indochina may lead to is conjectural rather than factual. The statement is therefore too categorical. Once French Indochina fell, Thailand would, in all probability, accept Communist domination. The threat to Malaya would be greatly increased if Thailand fell. A defense of Burma by the British would still be possible, particularly if India were willing to furnish forces. Such a defense, however, would be much more difficult after French Indochina and/or Thailand had fallen. If Thailand had fallen, Malaya and Burma would have to be defended simultaneously.

c. Change the last three sentences of the second paragraph under the heading CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING U.S. ASSUMPTION OF INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY FOR INDOCHINA, to read (changes indicated in the usual manner):

> "~~On the other hand achievement of stability by the Associated States would mean, in effect, the elimination of the Viet Minh and the establishment of anticommunist and Western oriented states on the southern border of Communist China and might also face the United States with a choice between use of its own armed forces or abandonment of the area to Communist control. It is doubtful whether the Chinese Communists would believe that they could afford to permit such a development.~~ There would ~~therefore~~ be continuing real danger of Chinese Communist armed intervention in the event that U.S. courses of action in Indochina appeared to be leading to defeat of the Viet Minh."

Reason: This is a negative approach which would preclude accomplishment of U.S. objectives toward Indochina. In any event, the

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[5] I.e. deletions struck through; additions underscored.

Joint Chiefs of Staff do not consider the situation in the case of French Indochina to be analogous to that in North Korea to the extent that danger of defeat of the Viet Minh forces will necessarily lead to intervention by the Chinese Communists.

d. Change subparagraph *a* under the heading U.S. OBJECTIVES to read (changes indicated in the usual manner):

> "Enable the French to continue to fulfill French responsibilities for Indochina ~~without sacrificing~~ with minimum acceptable delay in development of French strength under NATO;"

Reason: The qualification with respect to French responsibilities for Indochina should be related to time rather than to progress in the development of French strength under NATO; otherwise, French replacements or new forces for Indochina, either routine or to prevent imminent disaster, might be withheld inasmuch as their dispatch might conceivably sacrifice in some degree the development of French strength under NATO.

e. Change subparagraph (*d*) at the end of the section of the paper under the heading U.S. OBJECTIVES as follows (changes indicated in the usual manner):

> "(*d*) Consistent with the achievement of U.S. over-all objectives in Indochina, minimize possibilities of Chinese Communist intervention."

Reason: In order to make it plain that U.S. objectives toward Indochina are not to be abandoned merely because of a possibility of Chinese Communist intervention. In any event, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider it may become necessary, in the security interests of the United States, to take a calculated risk with respect to Communist China.

f. Change the first part of the first sentence under the heading POSSIBLE U.S. COURSES OF ACTION as follows (changes indicated in the usual manner):

> "The courses of action which the U.S. might consider ~~following~~ to ~~maintain~~ improve the Franco-Vietnamese position in Indochina and to prevent deterioration of that position include~~:~~ the following:"

Reason: In the context of this sentence the word "position" may refer to the military posture of the French Vietnamese or to their position on the ground. In either case, it would not be sufficient from the United States military point of view for the Vietnamese to maintain a static posture or position. The transposition of the word "following" is in the interest of clarity.

g. Change the penultimate sentence in subparagraph *a* under the heading POSSIBLE U.S. COURSES OF ACTION to read (changes indicated in the usual manner):

> "Steps might ~~should~~ be taken to strengthen the MAAG Mission.

Reason: The Joint Chiefs of Staff are unaware of any cogent requirement for the strenghtening of the MAAG Mission to Indochina at this time. Such strengthening may become necessary in connection with increased assistance to that country.

h. Change the second sentence in subparagraph *d* under the heading POSSIBLE U.S. COURSES OF ACTION to read (changes indicated in the usual manner):

> "It must be estimated that the Chinese Communists have the same sensitivity about their southern border as they have demonstrated in the case of Manchuria and it is ~~probable~~ possible therefore that the intervention of U.S. armed forces in Indochina ~~would~~ might occasion a full-scale Communist military intervention."

Reason: The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not consider the situation in the case of French Indochina to be analogous to that in North Korea to the extent that intervention of United States armed forces in Indochina would occasion a full-scale Chinese Communist intervention. They believe this to be a possibility rather than a probability.

i. Add a new sentence as follows at the end of subparagraph *d* under the heading POSSIBLE U.S. COURSES OF ACTION:

> "In this connection, however, an occasional naval and/or air show of force in the general vicinity of Indochina might be advantageous."

Reason: For completeness.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
OMAR N. BRADLEY
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

[Enclosure 2]

Memorandum by the Secretary of the Army (Pace), the Secretary of the Navy (Kimball), and the Acting Secretary of the Air Force (Gilpatric) to the Secretary of Defense (Lovett)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] 8 April 1952.

Subject: Draft State Department Paper on Indochina dated 27 March 1952.

1. We are not favorably impressed by the draft statement on Indochina. It is apparent that the recommendations offer little more than an expectation of preserving the *status quo.* It is our opinion that a continuation of the current program is an expression of a sit tight philosophy without definitive goals. The mere fact that the loss of Indochina is a bleak prospect does not justify the continual restate-

ment of negative postulates which result in more and more dollars being poured into an uninspired program of wait and see.

2. Accepting the premise that Indochina is the key to Southeast Asia and must be kept secure from Communist influence, it is our opinion that any decision to increase economic or military assistance must be thoroughly analyzed in terms of costs, capabilities and end results. We suggest that such an analysis should include consideration of a dynamic program geared to produce positive improvement in the military and political situation.

3. Any analysis of Indochina brings out the point that the outphasing of French influence is essential to the emergence of efficient leadership which can unite all factions into a cohesive national government. On the other hand, the continuation of French military responsibility is, at least under present circumstances, essential to the preservation of internal security. The solution of the Indochina problem lies in concentrating on a resolution of this issue.

4. We suggest, therefore, that an analysis of increased economic and military assistance costs and capabilities should include consideration of a program whereby an expanded MAAG would undertake the training and equipping of a national army capable at least of preserving internal security, while international support, encouragement and cooperation is sought and brought to bear in developing Indochinese political self reliance and independence. In order to institute political reform, encourage the development of a sense of civic responsibility, and arouse enthusiasm and cooperation among the Associated States, such a program would be initiated only after an unequivocal declaration by the French of their intent to withdraw from Indochina at the expiration of a specified period. The program would be similar in concept, although not necessarily in scope, to that staged in Greece and Turkey. The prerequisites to its undertaking would be threefold:

a. It must be economically and militarily feasible from the U.S. point of view.

b. The French must approve and agree to cooperate fully with the U.S. and the Associated States and to continue military support to Indochina until the date set for the project's completion.

c. The Associated States must approve and agree to full support and cooperation with the combined U.S.-French effort.

While admitting the economic, political and military imponderables of such a program we believe that a dynamic approach offers possibilities that are considerably in excess of the current program.

FRANK PACE, JR.
DAN A. KIMBALL
ROSWELL L. GILPATRIC

[Enclosure 3]

Draft Memorandum Prepared in the Department of Defense[6]

[WASHINGTON,] April 3, 1952.

A COLD WAR PROGRAM TO SAVE SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR THE FREE WORLD

THE PROBLEM

To consider what measures should be taken by the United States to counter continued deterioration of the situation in Indochina in the absence of identifiable Chinese Communist aggression.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. That the military courses of action to counter Chinese Communist aggression in Indochina set forth in NSC 124[7] will be approved by the National Security Council.

2. That the most likely threat to Indochina and Southeast Asia is from a continuation of present deterioration of the Western position in that area without overt Communist intervention.

3. That the loss of Indochina and Southeast Asia would be unacceptable to the United States.

4. That, in view of the above, the United States would be prepared to make as great an effort to prevent the loss of Southeast Asia in the Cold War as to counter an overt aggression in that area.

DISCUSSION

As pointed out in NIE 35/1,[8] the critical financial situation of France is causing increasing concern over France's ability to maintain its position in Indochina and to support simultaneously its projected military effort in Europe. There are increasing indications that, at a later date, this situation will adversely influence France's will to continue resistance in Indochina.

It is even more probable that, in the long run, the rising tide of Asian nationalism will make it impossible or too costly to preserve Indochina as a conspicuous remnant of western colonialism in the Far East. The concessions which the French have already made, while far from satisfying native demands for independence, have probably carried the evolution away from colonialism past the point of no return.

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[6] This memorandum apparently represented the views of the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; for comments upon this memorandum, see memorandum by John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, to the Secretary of State, May 7, *infra*.

[7] NSC 124, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Communist Aggression in Southeast Asia," Feb. 13, 1952, is printed in volume XII.

[8] For NIE 35/1, Mar. 3, see p. 53.

It is essential in the present situation to keep French military power in Indochina as a shield against the imminent threat of Communist encroachment. Immediate French withdrawal would present the United States with the alternative of accepting the loss of Southeast Asia to Communism or assuming a major new commitment of our own military power. However, seen in the perspective of time, the problem for U.S. policy is not to keep the French indefinitely committed in Indochina, but to facilitate the inevitable transition from colonialism to independence in such a way that there is no opportunity for Communism to flow into an intervening power vacuum.

The essence of the problem which a United States program must meet is to utilize the forces which will be released by a firm promise of the withdrawal of French control, together with such assistance as the free world can supply, in proper phase with the program of French withdrawal so that the stability of the area will be increased rather than decreased. There are three basic elements of such a program:

(1) A French commitment to give the three Associated States effective independence within a reasonable period in such form and with such guarantees as to carry full conviction.

(2) An international program, preferably under the United Nations, designed to put an end to the civil war, to protect the three states from Communist aggression and subversion, and to aid and support them during the transition period.

(3) A French commitment to continue to defend the area during the transition period.

The French now maintain that the Associated States have already been given their independence. However, the actual relationship between the French and the governments of the Associated States, and the nature of the present native governments, has not been such as to convince a majority of the Indochinese or other Asian peoples that independence is yet a reality. There have been encouraging signs of evolution in the direction of a greater measure of independence. However, in order to obtain the fullest measure of native cooperation in the effort to resist Communist encroachment, and in order to obtain the support of a sufficient number of other Asian nations in any contemplated UN action, it will be necessary to remove whatever grounds remain for continued suspicion of French intentions.

Prior to any decision to place the matter before the United Nations, the United States should point out to the French the necessity for a statement designed to accomplish this purpose. Such a statement should include a commitment that as soon as the military situation permits, France will withdraw its forces from Indochina, the French Union relationships will be renegotiated on a more liberal basis, and the Indochinese states will be free to choose whether or not to remain in the French Union. Assurance of genuine independence for the peoples of Indochina, and removal of the bugbear of Western imperialism would enable the Indochinese people and their neighbors in Southeast Asia to focus their efforts on the social, economic, political, and military measures necessary to erect a stable bulwark against Communist encroachment. Such assurance would not only go far toward providing the motivation and dynamism which has been lacking under the existing Associated States regimes, but would, at the same time, seriously weaken the Viet Minh. For the latter, while undoubtedly organized and led by orthodox Communists, depends for its popular support, and for the recruitment of manpower into its armed forces, on nationalist anti-colonial sentiment rather than on Communist ideology.

The U.S. should also point out that, in addition to such a commitment, certain steps should be taken now designed to win increasing support and cooperation for the native governments and the prosecution of the civil war, recognizing that the implementation of these measures will necessarily be limited by the exigencies of the military situation and the ability of native personnel to carry out the administrative tasks. Such measures might include:

(1) Ease restrictions on freedom of press and association, and encourage the development of popular and responsible political organizations.

(2) Convene a Vietnamese National Assembly. Such an Assembly would have to be appointed initially, but with the understanding that elections will be held when feasible.

(3) Encourage the establishment of a broader-based government in Vietnam which would include genuine Nationalist elements, Cao Daists, Dai Viets, and a larger proportion of Tonkinese.

(4) Furnish assistance to the native governments in training administrative personnel, improving administration, eliminating corruption, and establishing an independent judiciary.

(5) Furnish guidance and assistance to the native governments in the development and presentation of a popular program of social and economic improvement, to include land reform, elimination of economic privileges, and adequate and equitable taxation, such a program to be based on a published annual budget.

(6) Weed out unreconstructed colonialists from key positions in the Army and the civil service in Indochina, and institute a vigorous indoctrination program designed to improve the methods of French officials and French troops in dealing with the native population.

Having thus given convincing proof of its intention to give full independence to the Associated States, France would be in a strong position to place the Indochina question before the United Nations. It could then be shown that the independence of the Indochinese peoples from France had been assured and that the only obstacle in the way of the full achievement of that independence was the continuing threat of Communist subversion or aggression. The next step would be to establish a UN Commission to study the situation in Indochina and make recommendations for ending the civil war and facilitating the transition to full independence. Such a Commission might be composed of representatives of the United States, UK, France, India, Australia, New Zealand, and the other states of Southeast Asia. Chinese representation on such a committee would undoubtedly present a difficult problem. In addition to its primary function, such a committee would be useful in making appropriate findings of fact in the event of subsequent Chinese Communist intervention.

A program under UN auspices could be carried out only if the French continued to provide the necessary military protection to the Indochinese states during the period of transition. The final renunciation by France of all colonial interests in Indochina would inevitably result in strengthening the opposition in the French public and the French General [*National*] Assembly to continuing appropriations for the Indochina war on the present scale. French business interests, which have hitherto supported the war, might react strongly against any loss of their economic privileges in Indochina. It may be possible, however, to preserve majority support in the Assembly for continuing to maintain the French military forces in Indochina during the transition period, provided that France were afforded sufficient relief from the economic burden. This would require the United States to assume an even larger share of the burden than it is now carrying.

There are several means by which this could be done within the limits of whatever program (Fiscal Year 1952 or 1953) is in effect at the time:

1. Accelerate deliveries of presently programmed equipment to Indochina. (The review of the munitions allocation system directed by the President's letter of 9 January 1952 [9] will undoubtedly result in accelerated deliveries).
2. Transfer to the Indochina program aid now earmarked for other recipients in Title III (Formosa, Philippines, Thailand).[10]
3. Subject to authorization by the President, transfer military funds from Titles I, II and IV up to a maximum of 10 percent (providing the 10 percent transfer authorization remains in the new legislation).

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[9] A copy of the letter is in the Truman Papers, PSF–General file, at the Truman Library.

[10] Reference is to the Mutual Security Act of 1951, Public Law 165, 82d Cong. (65 Stat. 373), Oct. 10, 1951.

(Funds obtained as in 2 and 3 above could be used to provide either hard or soft military goods).

4. If emergency considerations required, military goods and logistical support could be provided from the appropriations of the military departments, subject to the department's obtaining reimbursement by supplemental appropriation from the Congress.

If funds obtainable by the above measures were found to be insufficient, supplemental appropriations could be sought to make possible increased economic and military aid to France and to the Associated States.

The measure of success of an international program of the kind envisaged would be the extent to which the French forces could ultimately be disengaged and replaced by native armies. The mobilization, equipment, and training of the armies of the Associated States is therefore the most critical element of the program.

At the present time, there are four Vietnamese divisions in training, with two more scheduled to be formed in 1953, and an ultimate objective of eight. The United States is now furnishing the military equipment for these forces, and the French are assisting in their training. While certain Vietnamese units have already performed creditably in combat, experience indicates that two to three years would be an optimistic estimate of the time required to make the Vietnamese army into an effective independent fighting force. The development of competent leadership is the key limiting factor.

The legacy of popular animosity toward the French undoubtedly constitutes a handicap in the training of native troops under French guidance. Provision of a United States military training mission to the Associated States armies would eliminate this handicap. However, this advantage would have to be weighed against the difficulty of substituting an entirely new organization for one that is already a going concern. Language might also constitute a serious problem, since French is widely spoken in Indochina, and English is not.

The ultimate phase-out of French forces should be planned in such a way as to afford the maximum benefit at the earliest possible time to France's NATO contribution. It may be desirable to leave a residue of training personnel, headquarters staff officers, technical specialists, and perhaps Foreign Legion units after the bulk of French forces are withdrawn.

After the withdrawal of French forces, it will probably be necessary for outside military assistance to be continued for some time in order to ensure the maintenance of adequate armed forces by the Associated States. An army of eight divisions would be beyond the economic capacity of Vietnam to support on a long-term basis. Since it would never be possible for the Indochinese states to match the military potential of China, their defense against Chinese aggression will always be dependent upon international guarantees. Therefore, the long-term mission of the armies of the Associated States will be (1) to maintain internal security, and (2) to make at least an initial show of resistance against any Chinese Communist aggression. The degree to which the mission of internal pacification is accomplished prior to the French withdrawal will thus determine the size of the native armies and the amount of outside assistance which will subsequently be required.

751G.5/5–152

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 7, 1952.

Subject: Secretary of Defense's letter of May 1, 1952 concerning Indochina (Tab A).[2]

I. *Joint Chiefs' Comments* (*Tab B*): [3]

The suggestions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Department of State's draft paper on Indochina, embodied in the Joint Chiefs' memorandum of April 18, 1952 can, with exceptions to be noted later, be accepted by the Department. The exceptions are as follows:

(*a*) Paragraph 4 of the Joint Chiefs' memorandum:

> The Department believes that the French will continue their effort to maintain their position in Indochina provided that the United States makes available substantially increased financial assistance. The Department continues, as it has in the past, to give daily consideration to the courses of action which this Government may take if faced with French withdrawal from Indochina. We have been assured by the French Government that we will be given plenty of warning before any withdrawal operation is commenced. It is impossible to plan against this contingency in the absence of knowledge as to the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal.
>
> Even if it were possible to reach a firm U.S. decision at this time as to the course of action the U.S. would adopt in the event of French withdrawal, it would be most unwise to incur the possible dangers of the terms of the decision reaching the French or the States Governments.

(*b*) Paragraph No. 5(*g*) of memorandum:

> The Department must insist upon strengthening of the MAAG Mission in Indochina, without necessarily increasing its size. We believe you should say to Secretary Lovett that special qualifica-

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[1] Drafted by William S. B. Lacy, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs; William M. Gibson, Deputy Director; and Charles C. Stelle, Member of the Policy Planning Staff.

[2] *Ante*, p. 113.

[3] The memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, Apr. 18, is printed *ibid.*

tions for the present members of the MAAG are something less than local conditions require. For example, of the thirty-odd MAAG officers, only three command the French language which is indispensable to their functions in Indochina. Moreover, if the U.S. is to accept an increased degree of participation in Indochina the MAAG must be prepared to perform its new functions.

(*c*) Paragraph No. 5(*i*) of memorandum:

The Department does not disagree with the Joint Chiefs of Staff's proposal that an "occasional naval and/or air show of force in the general vicinity of Indochina might be advantageous". Such demonstrations, however, can be productive of unhappy results in a delicate situation; we therefore suggest that the Joint Chiefs agree to consider such matters on an *ad hoc* basis as they have in the past.

II. *Joint Secretaries' Recommendations* (*Tab C*):[4]

With reference to the second paragraph of Mr. Lovett's letter of May 1, we believe the only difference in point of view separating the two Departments arises, not from the nature of the objectives to be achieved in Indochina, but rather, from a choice of the means by which they are to be reached. It is evident from the Joint Chiefs' memorandum and our acceptance of their suggestions that we have no serious difference with the Chiefs.

The courses of action suggested by the Joint Secretaries (page 3)[5] would, in our opinion, require a distinct and unwise change in U.S. policy in Indochina. We believe that, as a practical matter, U.S. objectives in Indochina can be achieved only through the French. Therefore, proposals of the sort enumerated on page 3, which would undoubtedly encourage the French to withdraw from Indochina, are entirely undesirable.

The Joint Secretaries advocate a program which would consist of pressure upon the French for: (1) a commitment to give the three Associated States a guarantee of full independence within a reasonable period; (2) an international program, preferably under the United Nations, to put an end to the civil war and to protect the three States from Communist aggression and subversion; and (3) a French commitment to continue to defend the area. This program, in our belief, is self-defeating and, for that matter, dangerous in the extreme. In our opinion, if it were suspected in French circles that such a consideration as that embodied in the Joint Secretaries' memorandum were even under consideration in the American Government it would have a disastrous effect on the French will to continue their present program in Indochina with the sacrifices which it entails. Moreover, if the program were known in Vietnamese circles, it would so undermine confidence that it might sway the great mass of undecided middle-ground opinion against the present Governments and France in favor of Ho Chi Minh. With European and Indochinese soldiers fighting side by side, the results of such a movement can easily be foreseen.

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[4] Tab C to this memorandum consists of the memorandum of Apr. 8 from the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to the Secretary of Defense; and the draft memorandum of Apr. 3, "A Cold War Program To Save Southeast Asia for the Free World." The two documents are printed on pp. 117 and 119.

[5] Reference is to the draft memorandum "A Cold War Program To Save Southeast Asia for the Free World," *ibid.*

Without direct U.S. military participation, our objectives in Indochina can be achieved only through a continuation of the present scale of French effort. We have reason for concern in that we know the French would almost certainly reduce their efforts in Indochina if they could find a satisfactory way of disengaging French prestige. A program which, at this point, called for pressure on the French to give guarantees of independence on a set time table and for a transfer from the French to the United Nations of responsibilities for the area could only be calculated to appeal to the French as an opportunity for retreating from Indochina without the loss of prestige. It is therefore inconsistent to hope to embody in the same program a French commitment to continue to defend Indochina and pressure on the French for a course of action which gives them opportunity to withdraw.

We believe that progress toward U.S. objectives in Indochina can only be secured on the basis of a firm French belief that, in the first place, there is no honorable alternative to their continued acceptance of responsibility in Indochina and, in the second place, that it is the objective of the U.S. to bolster the French in the execution of their responsibilities in the area. We believe that only if the French are made increasingly aware that the U.S. is whole-heartedly supporting their effort in Indochina will there be opportunity for effective U.S. pressure on the French and on the States Governments for progress toward U.S. objectives in the area.

We cannot accept the assumption upon which the Joint Secretaries have postulated their paper: that the situation in Southeast Asia "continues to deteriorate". In point of fact, U.S. policy in Indochina, initiated by the Department of State but validated on several occasions by the National Security Council, has contributed to the preservation of Indochina from Communist domination for nearly two and a half years. During this time the following developments, all of them distinctly favorable, have eventuated:

1. In spite of increased Chinese material and advisory aid to the Viet Minh the French have been able to preserve their control over the large urban centers and rich rice producing areas in Cochin China and Tonkin.

2. The growth of the national armies has proceeded favorably and their role in active military operations has become increasingly important, thus offering the prospect of relieving European troops.

3. In spite of overwhelming difficulties in the assumption of the responsibilities required from the French under the terms of the various agreements granting independence within the French Union to the three States, steady progress has been made.

It is improper to identify our present policy as undynamic. The desirability of a policy should be measured by its success and not by its novelty. In this connection we believe it important to emphasize that the favorable developments enumerated above have been possible only because the U.S. has worked in cooperation with the French Government and has, by and large, been able to allay the fear of the latter that the U.S. wished to abandon or displace it. Concomitantly, the French have continued to make the great sacrifices in men and treasure which they have made only because they were given assurances of American support—political, economic and military.

There are, nonetheless, certain recommendations embodied in the Joint Secretaries' memorandum which the Department can easily accept because these recommendations have been held by this Department as operating objectives for several years. They are:

1. That U.S. policy must be designed not to keep the French committed indefinitely in Indochina but to facilitate the transition from colonialism to self-government in such a way that there is no opportunity for Communism to flow into a power vacuum;
2. That we seek to obtain the fullest measure of international cooperation and the support of a sufficient number of Asian nations;
3. The six measures recommended on pages 5 and 6 of the Joint Secretaries' memorandum, all of which have long been included among U.S. purposes are also fully recognized and agreed to by the French.

III. In view of the compelling circumstances in France and Indochina it is the Department's view that we may find it necessary to take steps to anticipate the possible inability of the French to meet the budgetary problems arising from the Indochina operation. It is our belief that the present French budget may prove insupportable, politically and financially, to France unless it is reduced by approximately $250 million. Coincidentally, the present cost to France of the Indochinese national armies project is of the same order of magnitude. It is our belief that further American financial assistance to France on account of the Indochina operation had best be extended through the medium of support to the national armies project. In this connection we wish to quote in part from a memorandum prepared for you on February 11, 1952:[6]

"The formation and commitment to battle of the Indochinese National Armies should be accelerated in every possible way. *In our opinion, this offers the most promising prospect of influencing the political complex in a positive way, and of providing additional as-*

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[6] For the complete text of the memorandum, see p. 28.

sistance in an effective manner. In Indochina, as in other oriental countries, political stability as a practical matter often results from the maintenance of a strong national army. In Indochina the national armies will represent the only attribute of sovereignty and independence which captures the imagination of the indigenous population. Finally, only through the commitment to battle of Indochinese troops can the problem of the shortage of French manpower in Indochina be solved. The formation of the national armies in Indochina has proceeded with reasonable speed, the limiting factors are shortage of cadres to train Indochinese officers and NCO's and shortage of equipment. Therefore, the U.S. should be prepared:

> "*a.* to increase its supply of matériel to the national armies;
>
> "*b.* to continue to press both French and Indochinese to appoint Indochinese commanders of the national armies.
>
> "*c. to consider assuming all or part of the financial burden now borne by the French necessary to the maintenance and increase of the Indochinese national armies.* If an appreciable increase in American involvement in the Indochinese operation is justified, as we believe it to be, it seems clear that, for both political and military reasons, the U.S. should choose the national armies project as the first area in which it is prepared to accept increased direct responsibility."

We suggest that you tell Mr. Lovett that the Department believes that the program it has advocated for Indochina is a sound one. You may wish to state that, as it is approved U.S. policy to withhold Southeast Asia from Communist control by every means available to us other than the direct deployment of U.S. ground forces in the area, it is our duty to pursue whatever practical means exists to further our objectives. Granted the inability of the native governments to assure the territorial integrity of the area for the foreseeable future without outside help and the unlikelihood that other friendly nations than France are able or willing to participate in the defense of the area, individually or collectively, we are obliged to support the only practicable means available to us, which in this case is the French.

The French will continue to assist the native governments on a major scale to defend their territories *only under certain specific conditions.* These conditions include an honoring by the States Governments and France's allies of the agreements under which the three Associated States were granted self-government within the French Union and assurance from the United States that we will continue to supply: (*a*) military aid in support of the French Union forces on the field of battle and, (*b*) military and financial aid toward the achievement of the only goal which represents both a relief to France of the overwhelming burden which she is now carrying in Indochina and a satisfaction of the joint U.S., French and Indochinese objective—the creation of national armies capable of assuring the defense of the three Associated States without major outside help.

The only program for us to follow is to continue to do everything possible to encourage the French to remain in Indochina. To this end we must assure them of our continued support of French execution of their responsibilities in the area. We must also provide them with the military and economic assistance which has already been programmed in the requests to the Congress.

We suggest you tell Mr. Lovett that there can be no guarantee that this program will be adequate. There is a strong possibility that the French will not be able to support the present 1952 French military budget. In this case it is possible that there would be severe pressure in French opinion for a reduction of French responsibilities in Indochina. We may find ourselves, therefore, later this year, faced with the necessity of undertaking emergency measures of financial assistance to the French in order to prevent a French withdrawal from Indochina. In this case, it is our belief, that financial assistance for the national armies would offer the best opportunity for coping with the situation.

Mr. Lovett can best further our common objective by continuing to cooperate with us in obtaining Congressional authorization for our aid programs and by endeavoring to assure that such unrealistic proposals as that presented in the Joint Secretaries' memorandum are no longer offered, if only because they represent a great potential danger in that they might, if their existence were ever to become known to the French and the States Governments, result in the very situation which our past and present actions have been designed to avoid—an immediate choice between allowing Indochina, and possibly all of Southeast Asia, to fall into Communist hands or attempting to defend it ourselves with little or no assurances of outside help.

There is attached an appendix (Tab D) which provides a detailed analysis of the French budgetary situation with particular reference to the incidence of the Indochina program or the French financial situation.[7]

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[7] Tab D, a memorandum prepared by Edgar J. Beigel of the Office of Western European Affairs, is not printed.

751G.00/5-1052 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 10, 1952—midnight.

2216. Rptd info Paris unn, Hanoi unn. Fol summary views of newly arrived dipl counselor, Min Offroy:

1. Principal task French is to find means reducing commitment and way break present deadlock Indochina. He impressed by fact that

leaders both in and out of govt (he cited De Gaulle,[1] Pleven, Mendes-France) all told him present sitn cld not continue. Before becoming Pres Council, Edgar Faure had told him that unless Amers wld help actively France cld not carry on. FonOff expects him make recommendations for FonOff policy Indochina. Offroy says no hope whatsoever of mil solution and uncertain that ground can be held against Commie penetration and subversion of not only Tonkin but SE Asia neighbor states. He not impressed by partial successes of recent clearing operations in Tonkin delta.

2. To break stalemate, psychological shock required. He thinks Letourneau has mandate to seek "du nouveau" in all his actions.

3. Offroy's own principal suggestion for getting politico-mil sitn off dead center is tripartite declaration by French, Brit, and US of community of aims in SEA. Three principal points wld be (*a*) achievement of independence of SE Asian countries; (*b*) security; (*c*) improvement living conditions and econ life.

Such declaration of aims need not necessarily imply prior agreement on guarantee of frontiers of SEA. Statement wld be in nature of Pacific Charter (cf Atlantic Charter) rather than Pacific Pact. Altho it might be prelim to collective security arrangements.

He has submitted long memo to Letourneau on this proposal.

4. With respect internal Indochina sitn, Offroy subscribes to accelerated evolutionary idea. He has noted recent declaration and actions of Templer[2] in Malaya and believes something analogous cld be attempted here. An evolutionary declaration confirming France's desire give even greater autonomy to Associated States wld be desirable. In order get tripartite declaration of type described, Offroy feels French wld be willing go very far—indeed much further than Leg has considered that French sld be urged—in giving such assurances.

(*Comment:* When it observed to Offroy that it difficult to reconcile this analysis of French intentions with Letourneau's insistence continuity in Fr policy, including March eight agreements, and Letourneau's own identification with French policy, Offroy said it his personal opinion that need to revise sitn and demands French public opinion wld weigh more heavily.)

In any case, whether or not declaration forthcoming, Offroy thought concessions were to be made. He felt he did not yet know enough about Indochina however, to be sure that they wld have desired effect. This certainly also Letourneau's view. For example, Letourneau had told him he wld like give Norodom Palace to Bao Dai but that it wld then become empty shell like Imperial Palace in Hanoi unless Bao Dai wld live in it.

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[1] General Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Rally of the French People; head of Free French forces during World War II; President of the French Provisional Government, 1945–1946.

[2] Sir Gerald Templer, British High Commissioner in Malaya.

5. Although he not anticipating US decision with respect to action in event Chi invasion, Offroy hoped that sitn in Indochina cld be internationalized to extent that token contingents of Occidental powers, including US, might participate in Indochina on pattern of Fr battalion in Korea. Letourneau had told him, however, that US infantrymen was thing "we wld never get in any circumstances".

6. In sum, Offroy appears believe that best French can hope for is holding operation. Only hope of relief being polit solution and assault on VM morale, possibly to be hastened by tripartite declaration and symbolic internationalization of kind he proposes. He believes that French polit warfare and propaganda in Indochina has been wretched. Problem is, of course, difficult one since task of French is "to convince Viet that they going to stay in Indochina at the same time as they try to convince them they are going to get out". In other words, Viets must be convinced that France and Huu not going to withdraw and leave country in lurch, but at same time Viets must believe that France is eventually going to give fuller independence to Vietnam than now stipulated in basic accords.

Another distant hope for relief of strain lies in revival of "Japan as a force". By this he apparently includes both possibility of use Jap forces here, or development of Jap FE potentials which wld discourage Chi from fon adventure or dissipation of reserves in aid to SEA.

7. Offroy emphasized that these views of his provisional and exploratory and must be very closely held as it cld not be thought that he was pursuing "personal policy".

In Legs views, attitude Offroy, Janot, Dannaud, young group now in principal advisory position, indicates desire to revise French policy even while French insist on necessity of maintaining rigid form of March eight accords.

HEATH

751G.00/5-1052: Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 10, 1952—midnight.

2218. Rptd info Paris, Hanoi, Phnom Penh, Vientiane unnumbered.

1. My immed preceding tel,[1] Legtel 2224,[2] Musto 429 [3] outlined polit decisions and declarations which we think Fr and Bao Dai need make in order insure creation of Viet Govt of natl union willing and able

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[1] Telegram 2217 from Saigon, May 10, is not printed.

[2] *Infra.*

[3] Telegram Musto 429, from the Mutual Security Agency in Washington to the MSA mission at Saigon, Apr. 11, not printed, requested the mission and the Legation to formulate proposals for measures which might be taken to forestall deterioration in the economic and financial condition of the Associated States. (751G.5 MSP/4-1152)

to govern. This Leg–STEM message sets forth series of social and econ reforms such govt might undertake with US help, urging and guidance.

2. Bao Dai controlled Vietnam must at least rival effectiveness of Commie VM Govt by (*a*) strengthening govt tax and budgetary apparatus, implanting sense of dedication in public servants, and setting example of austerity; (*b*) appealing to econ groups—to peasants by implementing rapidly real and reform program coupled with agrarian tenancy and credit reform program and with reorg of rice trade; to bourgeois by providing commercial and industrial credit; and to workers by promulgating and enforcing modern labor legis; (*c*) appealing to Viets as individuals by intensifying illiteracy reduction, housing, and health programs. None of these suggestions new; each announced over year ago in Bao Dai's first Tet message,[4] but none has been energetically pushed. This leads STEM and Leg to believe emphasis must in present phase be concentrated on governmental reforms, although this obvious only part of program.

3. With this background, STEM and Leg suggest possibility, after reading substantial preliminary agreement with French, of arranging meeting at ministerial level Saigon or Dalat with Letourneau and Huu, and possibly with Bao Dai present, to explore ways and means of getting legal regime off present dead center and formulate specific recommendations to Viet Govt for concrete action in order of priority. If groundworks carefully prepared to preclude possible resentment Amer initiative and invest recommendations with maximum auth, such meeting might afford us appropriate opportunity to propose urgent consideration by Viet Govt of fol measures:

A. Governmental reforms.

(1) US, and if French and Viets agree, wld be prepared finance Amer econ counselors or third nationality (perhaps UN) experts to assist Viet Govt; particularly in field gen finance, customs, taxes, budgets, and civil service at regional as well as natl levels. Their terms office wld be limited strictly to one year renewable only at request Viets. Their job wld be:

(*a*) Assist budget preparation and year-end accts of actual receipts and revenues.
(*b*) Recommend tax reforms; type, scale, and admin including possible exchange tax help finance war effort.
(*c*) Recommend and help institute admin improvements including reduction supernumerary personnel.

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[4] Bao Dai's Lunar New Year address, Feb. 6, 1951, announced plans for economic development and agrarian reform. The text of the address was transmitted to the Department of State as enclosure 9 to despatch 503 from Saigon, Feb. 14, 1951, not printed. (751G.00/2–1451)

We have hitherto opposed this while Viets have appeared willing have such experts, but possibly time ripe for new attempt sound out both parties though realized in long run only Viets can run Vietnam.

(2) US strongly to support institute of issue program for bond issuance to finance B (3) and B (5) below and to mop up surplus purchasing power. US to urge institute ask IMF study question of piaster exchange rate and IBD [*IBRD*] study possibility long-term loans.

(3) High [garble], or its equivalent, shld be reinvigorated, given adequate personnel and funds in order reduce corruption.

(4) US to help finance and possibly staff with third party experts school for public admins. This long pending project.

(5) Vietnam Govt shld give example of self-imposed austerity. Letourneau indicated he wld impose austerity on all under his auth.

(6) As suggested preceding tel, France shld implement reorg its own admin soonest and take other similar measures in order give impression "new deal".

B. Appeal to econ groups.

(1) Land reform on large scale shld be instituted immed along lines Kor and Jap programs. US might offer finance admin costs. There has been gen acceptance of land reform by Viet Govt but no concrete actions to date. French believed interested, subj to legitimate exceptions, for rubber and other "industrial" crops.

(2) Landlord-tenancy laws shld be reformed and promulgated immed. Reform of South Vietnam's law has been pending for over year.

(3) Pre-war "credit populaire" system of agri credit shld be reinstituted or new system established—original financing to come from US and from bond issue A (2) above. Latter wld of course be repayable. As soon as system created, local usury shld be drastically punished. These measures have also been "under consideration" for over year.

(4) System of rice crops extending from farmer to consumer (whether local or export) shld be established, possibly under supervision third party experts, in order have yardstick for margin between prices recd by farmer and paid by consumer. Gen concept part of Pipaud (SOC) program presented Natl Assembly.

(5) New and increased govt commercial and industrial credit facilities shld be made available assist creation Viet bourgeoisie. Same sources for funds as for (3).

(6) Fr shld be encouraged in their own long-run interest persuade, if possible, their entrenched business groups gradually take in Viets on Boards of Directors, starting with Bank of Indochina on which French Govt directly represented. Present French hegemony over basic industries of Vietnam one of Ho's strong points.

(7) Vietnam promulgate long pending labor reform law and revise rubber plantation labor contracts. Both actions shld tend deflate some of effectiveness Ho propaganda.

(8) Adopt some of Ho's sanctions against illiteracy, for instance requiring persons having govt facilities such as market stalls, etc., to be able read and write after period of grace.

Most of above program, except for original capital of credit institutions involves only admin or tech assistance expenditures. This part of program stressed because without strong govt and without appealing to individuals basic econ security and consequent stake in community, it believed that continued emphasis on direct impact programs may become increasingly less effective. It difficult to buy allegiance. Allegiance based on healthy self-interest. Hence entire reform and improvement program shld be fully publicized, not simply to make it known but to generate popular enthusiasm, sense of individual responsibility and hope of personal benefit. This program wld fall short of its mark of achieving definite polit benefits if it limited to exchanges between techs. It seems more realistic attempt force Bao Dai govt to win allegiance by insuring increased econ stake in that govt's success by all elements population. Without such stake Commie propaganda will presumably continue delude Ho population.

C. Other programs.

Other desirable programs involving public works, health, housing, etc., shld, if funds restricted, be subordinated drive for better govt and direct appeal to individual in their econ capacity.

4. STEM and Leg stress that none of projects in para 3 is new. Essential recommendation now being presented is that time has arrived to give old and in most cases accepted projects different emphasis and new type of push in new setting. As described in preceding tel, program shld be preceded by far-reaching polit adjustments.

Heath

751G.5 MSP/5-1252 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State [1]

SECRET

Saigon, May 12, 1952—3 p. m.
[Received 7 : 31 a. m.]

2224. Sent Paris unn, Phnom Penh unn, Vientiane unn, Hanoi unn. Re Musto 429.[2]

1. Letourneau's arrival in Saigon [3] as first Fr resident Min of State occasion for fresh approach Vietnamese problem. Continued lack polit dynamism in Viet, snail's progress of govt in popularity, auth, and fiscal econ or social reform causes grave concern particularly when contrasted with unyielding will and drive of Ho Chi Minh. Unless this situation improves rapidly it may undo any milit effort or accomplishment against VM. This is apprehension of Fr and Leg.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in six parts.

[2] Musto 429 is described in footnote 3, *supra*.

[3] Letourneau arrived in Saigon on Apr. 21.

The Bao Dai camp has infinitely greater advantages but has not been able so far to win nor demonstrate that it will ever win decisively. Bao Dai and Ho each have roughly 11,000,000 Viets in their respective zones. Former has practically all good rice lands, rubber plantations, coal mines, ports, cement factories and major facilities. Ho Chi Minh lives in malarial foothills at bare subsistence levels. Bao Dai has more men under arms than Ho Chi Minh, is helped by the elite of Fr regular forces; Fr spends billion dollars a year here and US will have spent something over billion by end FY 53. Fr Union forces have aircraft, warships, tanks, heavy artillery, napalm; the Commies have had only trickle of Chi light arms aid.

VM losses, even if only half French estimates, are about five times those of Fr Union and many times greater than those of France. Yet, in spite of this Franco-Bao Dai numerical, material and fin superiority, bulk of Fr Union troops are still hemmed in Tonkin perimeter and are devoting themselves (with some success) to operations against the enemy who have penetrated their stockade.

There are several causes for this situation. One is fact that a fanatically indoctrinated guerilla force possessed of mobility, a privileged sanctuary (China) and increasing foreign (Chinese) assistance can always prolong resistance even against even greatly superior reg forces.

But in addition are these facts: (*a*) Ho's Govt is apparently more efficient, dedicated, disciplined and harder working than legal govt. (*b*) Ho, because of stronger police power, better propaganda and Communist "community sense" can both force and to some extent even persuade his people to pay heavy taxes—generally to devote possible ½ of GNP to war effort (no factual data available and personal evaluations differ) and to keep on fighting in spite of tremendous privations. (*c*) There is a mistrust and even hatred of Fr accumulated thru colonial subjection and founded on racial differences and which has not been allayed by effective or timely French action or propaganda.

In this situation of near-stalemate there are three basic and dangerous problems which must be attacked. First is continuation of Franco-Viet tensions which sterilize progressive plans; another is insufficiency and unpopularity of Huu Govt. Huu has to his credit foundation of Viet Govt apparatus. He has not been able to form an effective govt of natl union including respected Natl elements on present polit bases. I believe in his sincerity but too many Viets do not. In part, his inability to attract better element to his govt is due to failure of Fr to convince Viet intellectuals—and the peasants—that France really means to get out of Vietnam once hostilities cease and that meanwhile they are fighting Vietnamese battle of independence against secret Chi invasion. Another cause lies in Huu's inability to share auth. He insists on retaining essential powers and major decisions in his own hands. His Ministers are merely subordinates. His is a mistrustful one-man show and on such terms he is unable to attract the ablest men to govt.

Third problem is refusal of Bao Dai to accept consistent active responsibility for conduct of govt. One is almost inclined to doubt that Bao Dai, despite protestations to that effect, really wants an efficient popular govt. He clearly does not want such a govt which wld be dominated by a politician of republican tendencies in whom he will see a rival.

With regard to first problem, Letourneau and his closest advisors now see the urgent necessity of doing something dramatic to dispel hatred and distrust of French. They are prepared to see nationalist elements with anti-French records figure in a new Viet Govt. They are ready to reorganize the High Commissariat in a more acceptable form, to initiate certain economic aid actions and to improve French propaganda in IC. Our role is to encourage French in this new approach and for our information service to help theirs.

With regard to second and third problems, French have been endeavoring, and we have supported their efforts, to persuade Bao Dai to order the formation of an efficient representative govt which wld promptly undertake necessary reforms and action. Letourneau's view is, and rightly, that he must not be placed in position of demanding either the dismissal of Huu or a fundamental change of govt. This must be done on initiative of Bao Dai. However, Letourneau's present opinion is that it is in fact impossible at moment to find proper successor for Huu as Premier of Govt of National Union; that only effective solution is for Bao Dai himself, as an interim measure, to take over presidency of Council of Ministers with men like Tri, possibly Ngo Dinh Diem perhaps one or two others serving as vice presidents. I believe this solution shld be attempted. I am not, however, sanguine that even adding our exhortations to those of French will persuade Bao Dai to accept such an increase in activity (small as it wld be), decisions and responsibility. Without a convincing, well-publicized French action program giving Vietnamese more confidence in future it is uncertain that Bao Dai cld be lured from his retreat, or that nationalist elements wld now rally to his leadership.

Whether or not present Huu government is changed and Bao Dai can be persuaded to live up to his responsibilities there are certain measures which in our opinion must be undertaken promptly—(1) by French, and (2) by Viet Govt. They are specified in this and immediately succeeding telegram. If Dept agrees, we shall urge them on Letourneau and his advisors, and on Viet Govt and Bao Dai. If, as it now seems probable, Letourneau elects to make trip to Washington in June they can be discussed with him there.

I. *A French action program.*

A. French *bona fides*: Letourneau has assured AS of France's faithfulness to its mission. Yet rumors of French plans to negotiate with Ho Chi-Minh and Sino-Commies are multiplying. Huu himself believes them. The French shld do what they can to remove these suspicions officially and publicly. Neither Viet nor ourselves can be expected to give utmost to solution which may be abandoned without warning. In meantime, until west has made up its mind about what it wld do in case of Chinese invasion, French can be expected to consider channels of escape or negotiation.

B. An evolutionary statement: A statement of French plans for IC independence made during a war of uncertain duration cld hardly name a date or set a timetable; at the least, it might say that when and as peace is restored the position of Associated States within French Union cld be reconsidered. (This wld be much more cautious declaration than that of General Templer in Malaya in not wholly dissimilar circumstances.) It shld be accomplished by a series of French acts and statements which wld testify to French desire for evolution within French Union. French have such statement under consideration; Letourneau is dubious and Offroy is in favor. Many of arguments against an evolutionary statement have now been removed. Since the Pau agreements, there exists the armature of Viet Govt, however imperfect: there are now 37 Viet battalions as compared to 5, two years ago; Viet balance of payments is now favorable (due, it is true, to French military expenditures); Viet people are less deceived about the character of Viet Minh; French Union forces wld no longer be shocked by such statement; and (subject to Paris views) it seems possible the French public and Parliament wld accept it. French position wld seem to have moved far enough so that such declaration wld catch up with facts.

C. Reorganization of French representation in IC: Letourneau has given me heartening assurances of progressive plans in this respect. At present the High Commissariat too closely resembles the instrument with which France governed its colonies. It ought now to be remodeled in direction of its final form as a mission to Associated States govts, with a group of attached aid missions. French regional commissariats shld be "phased out." The rolls of French functionaries shld be more rapidly reduced. Statements on the numbers who remain and their justification shld be more candid and less defensive; bureaucrats of "old colonialist stripe" shld be despatched to colonies.

D. French aid to Associated States: At present, except for very small advances to Laos, French aid is in form of heavy military expenditures, including major costs national armies, and subsidies to French institutions and firms. French shld be encouraged to set up separately in French budgets a direct IC economic aid allocation together with French military aid to native armies. This wld be identified as French aid. The recommendation Letourneau has already made to Paris in this respect shld be encouraged in order to give the French Union affiliation a positive value in Vietnamese eyes rather than a negative tutelary character.

E. Fr Union and AS Dipl representation: Internal Fr Union relations shld move toward Commonwealth model, with exchange HI COMMs among AS and with Fr. Letourneau tells me this has already been decided but it has not yet been publicized. AS shld be encouraged open diplomatic relations with more countries. Mar 8 agreements not withstanding (including Jap).

F. Mar 8 and Pau accords: Various provisions Mar 8 accords such as some those with respect fon relations have already been outdated; those provisions which exclude fon technicians needed carry thru program described in our fol tel must surely be relaxed in practice; the stipulation that no Viets decree or law which affects Fr interest cld become law unless and until it is promulgated by Fr HICOMM appears incompatible with loyal relations among AS and should be changed. It appears, however, premature for US urge major alterations in either Customs Union or central banking arrangements established after bitter discussion at Pau. Altho AS and Fr both appear believe that quadipartitism or even bipartitism unworkable in long run due polit separatist tendencies, this does not appear moment to upset only recently established organisms with unfavorable result on shaky econs of AS. More conservative position appears be urge all parties continue endeavor make Pau organisms work without attempt by any party use their veto power to secure preferential power positions.

G. The organs of the Fr Union: Fr shld by this time have devised formula for operation governing organisms of Fr Union, and interpretation Fr constitution which does more honor to principle of independence AS while preserving paramount metropolitan influence still necessary to common cause. There may be other details which are outmoded and restrictions which are no longer desired by the Fr. Letourneau shld not be in position of being forced by events into making piecemeal rulings but shld be able think himself now and expound any liberal interpretation these basic instruments which it safe to make, or which are already constructively in effect.

H. The Viets Army: In Viet opinion its tardy creation owes as much to VM pressure on Fr and threat of world war as to Fr good-faith. Yet Army in principle evidence and hope of statehood and proof that dialogue does lead to independence for Vietnam. If good share measures proposed in this brace tels are carried thru by Fr, Viets Army may be developed into patriotic and reliable instrument. Fr cld abandon present reserves about speeding up officer procurement and formation of staffs and services (Letourneau has said he for speed up). Dalat School intake cld be doubled or number schools increased. Training of more officers in Fr and US cld be accepted. US aid cld be applied to problem.

I. Viets foreign trade: Assuming that Fr do not demand unduly preferential regime at current Paris interstate econ talks, reasonableness Fr position cld be exploited here. Letourneau might well say that whereas Fr Union is a mutually supporting assoc which aims maximize benefits and security of all, Fr is not insensible to particular problems and concerns which geography imposes on the several members. Fr and Vietnam have only advantages to gain in protecting and advancing their trade by reasonable measures; at same time Fr aware that Vietnam member Asian as well as Fr community. Increase in trade with non-Commie Asia and Jap, with due safeguards to Fr concerns and established trade channels, shld be Fr as well as Amer and Viets goal.

J. Viets capital: Fr shld favor and declare themselves in favor Viets capital formation, consistent with needs war and orderly development. Fr shld encourage development Viets banking facilities and shld not oppose measures to foster reasonable amt reinvestment in Vietnam of the large profits made by fon firms.

II. *Propaganda projects and methods.*

1. If above program adopted, maximum publicity gains shld be made in its execution. It shld be unfolded in closely-timed speeches; and applied in stages designed for cumulative effect accompanied by telling propaganda gestures.

2. The Norodom Palace: Perhaps most important these wld be transfer this symbol Fr hegemony. As isolated gesture it wld have slight effect. As part orchestration described above, it wld compound effect Fr action program.

3. Bao Dai: In his torpid mood, His Majesty has little impact on sitn. Even adrenal spurt will on his part wld not transform sitn without basic program. We shld back any measures Letourneau can suggest to present him as more responsible, dynamic, persevering, self-denying and popular. If Fr give him Palace, he shld bring his family live in it.

4. "Austerite". Vide Letourneau's airport speech;[4] this all to good.

5. "Amabilite". Plan promote amity between Fr and Viets at all levels by public campaigns and official directives and conduct.

6. "Clarte". Fr goals and intentions will never be understood so long as 95 percent output vast Fr and Viet info services is in Fr and addressed solely to "evolue" levels. They must get down to the rice roots.

III. *A Viets action program.*

This chiefly set forth in second tel;[5] on polit front it must include early formation Assembly and gradual increase its powers; elections in areas where these are possible; formation responsible trade unions; wide area civil liberties; progressive relaxation police state controls consistent with state of war; increased efficiency in govt and campaign against corruption; concentration on task of developing courageous and resourceful resident regional and provincial cadres, and finally the transformation of large and costly Viets informational service into effective instrument.

In many these fields responsibility is of course still shared with Fr. Fr shld make clear they favor reform.

Even if all restraints were removed Viets wld not automatically produce results. Our leverage must be continuously applied.

Fr action program as above outlined shld be met with concrete gestures appreciation by Viets: specifically, perhaps Viets recognition Viet obligations to Fr Union.

IV. Conclusion.

Above seems minimum program if underbrush is to be cleared away for new structure which will assure to greater degree than present apparatus that US aid will not have been given in vain. On part Fr it calls chiefly for new attitude or at least better exhibition their true attitudes, and on Viet side it means reorientation and toughening of only legal govt thru which US can work.

Great thing in Franco-Viets relations is to be forehanded. Unfortunately very real concessions made by Fr have followed rather than preceded such events as arrival Chi Commies on frontier; collapse Fontainebleau, defeat at Cao Ban [*Bang*], world war threat at beginning Korean campaign; and Fr disappointment Hoa Binh.

This time Fr and Bao Dai shld make supreme effort announce and execute timely program. Otherwise there seems nothing left try except dubious alternatives of negot with enemy; or internationalization, with its unpredictable results for IC politics and calls on US Forces; or continuance of stalemate which may be inching toward solution but which is sure handicap to Fr world.

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[4] In an address on the occasion of his arrival at Saigon, Apr. 21, Letourneau emphasized the continuity of French policy based on the independence of the Associated States within the French Union, stressed the importance of the rapid development of the national armies, denounced internal quibbling and obstructionism, and appealed for austerity in the face of the common enemy (Joint Weeka 17 from Saigon, Apr. 27, 1952; 751G.00(W)/4–2752).

[5] See telegram 2218 from Saigon, May 10, *supra*.

HEATH

PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "Indochina"

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 12, 1952.

Subject: Indochina

Participants:	*Defense*	*State*
	Robert A. Lovett	Dean Acheson
	William C. Foster[2]	David K. Bruce
	Frank Pace, Jr.	H. Freeman Matthews
	Dan A. Kimball	Charles E. Bohlen[8]
	Roswell L. Gilpatric	John M. Allison
	Charles P. Noyes[3]	Paul H. Nitze
	Gen. Nathan F. Twining[4]	
	Gen. Omar Bradley	
	Gen. Charles L. Bolte[5]	
	Adm. William F. [*M.*] Fechteler[6]	
	Adm. Edmund T. Wooldridge[7]	

[Here follows discussion of the question of action which might be taken in the event of Communist Chinese intervention in Indochina.]

Mr. Lovett said that he would like to turn to the problem of Indochina under the assumption that there was no overt Chinese intervention.

Admiral Fechteler said that General Salan and Admiral Ortoli[9] wanted to impress the U.S. that the French are in Indochina to see the thing through to the bitter end.

Mr. Acheson said that he thought the French Government was impressed with the difficulty of the French extricating themselves from

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[1] The portion of this memorandum not printed here is included in documentation on general United States policies with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII. That compilation also contains material pertaining to the background of this meeting and on the continuing development of policy concerning the defense of Southeast Asia of which this meeting was a part.

[2] Deputy Secretary of Defense.

[3] Department of Defense Deputy Representative to the Senior Staff of the National Security Council.

[4] Vice Chief of Staff, United States Air Force.

[5] Lieutenant General Charles L. Bolté, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Research, United States Army.

[6] Chief of Naval Operations.

[7] Rear Admiral Edmund T. Wooldridge, Representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Senior Staff, National Security Council.

[8] Counselor of the Department of State.

[9] Vice Admiral Paul Ortoli, Commander of French Naval Forces in the Far East.

Indochina. Also, if they were to abandon that position it would make their north African situation worse. The French Government realize that they should stay in Indochina, but they feel they cannot afford to stay. If we don't do anything to help, the French may weaken all along the line. It seemed to him that we should look to see what can be done to strengthen the Vietnamese army. It may take approximately $250 million more.

Mr. Lovett said that we have justified our past MDAP presentations on the basis that 84% of the manpower would be paid for by others. He said we cannot maintain French manpower on U.S. funds.

Mr. Bruce said that the important thing was the desirability of eventually getting the French out of Indochina. This would mean the need of a native force double of what is there. France is now paying approximately $200 million for the native forces. They will need approximately $250 million additional if the native army is to be doubled. He asked whether it would be possible to make a direct contribution to the native army. It might be doubtful whether a native army could maintain itself alone, but this was our only hope. There would be a problem in handling the phasing out of French forces. Would it be possible to accelerate the training of native non-commissioned officers and instill a higher sense of responsibility in Vietnamese leaders?

Mr. Lovett questioned whether it would be possible to get all of the French out of Indochina. He thought it would be better to leave a substantial number there. He thought that Congressional appropriations were an uncertain base on which a native army would have to depend.

Mr. Foster said that one cannot omit the problem of colonialism. The French have tried to hold on to many things contrary to France's own basic interests. The only hope is to change the political balance in Indochina. In the past we have failed to influence the more effective people. We have been too prone to accept the people and the point of view in Indochina as something you can't do anything about, and no progress has been made in the last two years.

Mr. Allison said that he thought the French had made progress in the last two years, and recent telegrams indicated that Letourneau was prepared to go much further than he had in the past.

Mr. Foster said that nothing much had been done in training native leaders or in getting the support of the native populace. He thought that Letourneau was saying the same things now that he had said two years ago.

Mr. Acheson said the fence sitters in Indochina don't want to get down from the fence until they can see which side will win. It is, therefore, important to build up the native army if we expect to make progress in the political field. Can't we improve the training of the native army and equip it in a much more economical way than our own divisions are equipped?

Mr. Pace said that they certainly could be equipped far more cheaply than our own divisions.

Mr. Bruce pointed out that French expenditures for Indochina had gone up year by year from $400 million to $1,200 million. Of this, some $205–$210 million is for the native forces. There is a very direct interrelationship in Indochina between native morale and security. We can't cure the morale situation in Indochina by hopeful statements. The way to cure it is through concrete accomplishments. We also have the problem of the morale of the French [*Vietnamese?*] national army. The greatest thing that would improve the Vietnamese morale would be for them to have the feeling that through their own efforts they can provide for their own security. The real weakness is in leadership. Wouldn't it be possible to train officers and non-coms?

Mr. Pace said we could start now.

General Bolte pointed out that General Brink doesn't want to get into the training game since it would take about 4,000 men to do it.

Mr. Pace said that we had made great progress in south Korea. Van Fleet is using the same methods that were successful in Greece.[10] Some U.S. participation in training the Vietnamese army would be valuable. Our great job is training and we had better recognize it.

Mr. Acheson attempted to summarize the sense of the meeting in the following terms. We should agree as to what it is we want to do. We want to keep both the French and the Vietnamese in the battle. In order to accomplish that it will be necessary to enlarge the Vietnamese army so that there is some hope both for the Vietnamese and for the French. It will require intensive study to see how this will be done. Where are we going to get the money and other things to get started. We might make some progress with the French if the U.S. assists in their training program. The second part of the problem concerns the possibility of Chinese overt intervention. There should be a warning. It should indicate that aggression would be followed by action which would be painful to the source of aggression. What are the elements on which we can agree. The French should put out of their minds the possibility of U.S. ground forces participating in Indochina. We are prepared to give naval and air support. What is the first thing that needs to be done. We should obviously attack those things which are supporting the aggression. We should attack the communications to the area of aggression. Then we might take up the problem of a blockade. We should have thoroughly thought-out answers to the problems which would then arise. Probably it will be necessary to go further.

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[10] Gen. James A. Van Fleet, Commanding General, Eighth U.S. Army, in Korea, had served as Director of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory and Planning Group in Greece, February 1948–July 1950.

We can probably agree that, unless there is also trouble in Korea, we should not go into Manchuria.

Mr. Foster said that he thought any such program should be accompanied with measures of the type Mr. Bruce mentioned. The noncooperative French functionaries should be removed. The necessary political and economic measures in Indochina must go right along with the military measures Mr. Acheson had outlined. This may require putting considerable pressure on the French. What we need is action—not words.

Mr. Lovett suggested that Mr. Noyes and a representative of the State Department and the JCS prepare a paper which could be used by Mr. Acheson when he goes to Paris.[11] He also suggested that it may be necessary to screen our position preliminarily on the Hill. Many of our friends think we are now a fat boy with a bag of candy who is in danger of having the whole bag taken away.

Mr. Pace said he thought that the proposition which had been developed was a salable and affirmative proposition.

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[11] Acheson left Washington for Bonn and Paris on May 22 to participate in the signing of contractual agreements between the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States, the United Kingdom, and France; and for discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Britain and France concerning Germany, NATO, EDC, other European matters, and Southeast Asia. He was in Paris from May 26 to May 29 and arrived back in Washington on May 30.

611.90/5–1952

Memorandum of Conversation, by Lucius D. Battle, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State

[Extract]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 19, 1952.

Memorandum to S/S

Following the meeting at the White House today which the Secretary, Mr. Lovett and General Bradley attended with the President, the Secretary told a group in his office the results of the discussion.

Regarding Indochina and Southeast Asia, he said that they had gone over the paper which he took with him.[1] He said the military people were agreed on what was to be done now. They said that unless Congress cuts the funds badly there would be funds available. He said that Mr. Lovett and General Bradley both mentioned the importance of having a better government in Indochina.

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[1] Reference is to Position Paper on Indochina for Discussions with the French and the British, May 15, 1952. This paper, prepared by Charles C. Stelle of the Policy Planning Staff, reflected comments by various offices of the Department of State. On May 17, it was transmitted to the Secretary of State by the Policy Planning Staff, the Bureau of European Affairs, and the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, as an annex to a briefing memorandum prepared for the May 19 meeting, not printed. (751G.00/5–1752) A revised version of the position paper of May 15 received interdepartmental approval as document SCEM D–6/11, May 21, p. 150. SCEM D–6/11 differed from the May 15 draft as transmitted to Secretary Acheson on May 17 only in that it incorporated modifications suggested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense dated May 19, which is printed on p. 147.

The representative of the military establishment as well as the President agreed on the necessity for the warning statement. They felt that there must be some measure of agreement on this statement but not necessarily on all points. The JCS have prepared a paper criticizing our paper but apparently not violently.[2] The Secretary said the only point General Bradley mentioned concerned the last sentence of our paper.[3] The point seems to be that they interpret this as a direction to them to fight a kind of war they fear they could not win.

The Secretary said we would go ahead with the NSC paper on Southeast Asia and were to run this one and the NSC paper through side by side.[4]

As to what the Secretary says in his discussions with Mr. Eden and Mr. Schuman, he is to stress the necessity for getting ahead with the native army, stress the importance of a warning to prevent the Chinese from coming into the conflict, and to try to get the largest degree of agreement possible on the content of this warning.

[Here follows an account of Secretary Acheson's report on the part of the White House discussion which dealt with European questions, particularly the matter of Berlin; for text, see volume VII.]

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[2] For the memorandum under reference, which was transmitted by the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of State on May 20, see p. 147.

[3] The sentence under reference and the modification proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff appear in paragraph 2*g* of the JCS memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, May 19, p. 149.

[4] Reference is to the NSC 124 series concerning United States objectives and courses of action in Southeast Asia. Reports in this series and related documentation are included in material on general U.S. policies with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII.

751G.5 MSP/5-1252 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Legation at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, May 19, 1952—6:48 p. m.

1789. Urtel 2224 May 12, 6 parts, has recd particular attn and commendation those sections Dept concerned. Valuable résumé and analysis arrives at time when IC has been under special review in connection negot NSC SEA paper with Joint Chiefs and Dept Defense.

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[1] Repeated to Paris for information as telegram 6843.

Like Leg and Emb Paris, Dept is increasingly conscious need break present stalemate. Our recognition this fact furthered by recent reminders from Brit Govt of their concern present situation IC and knowledge of growing Fr preoccupation with crushing weight IC load and uncertainty of future thus lending argument to ever present possibility IC may become major internal Fr polit issue and withdrawal a reality. Whatever is done to break stalemate must be done within next few months before, (1) opening dry season mil operations in Tonkin and, (2) we are obliged to ask Cong for another major financial contribution to support IC operation and prevent Fr withdrawal.

Urtel well timed for use in talks Secy will hold in Paris with Schuman during next weeks. Under present plan Secy will not push issue at that time but anticipate inevitability IC will be reviewed at Fr instigation if only because it cannot be avoided in conjunction Fr financial problems, which we already know will be raised, and presence in Paris at same time of Letourneau. Nevertheless Depts present purpose is to defer major review IC with Fr until arrival Letourneau here in middle of June [2] when we shld be better prepared in that certain basic mil considerations will, we hope, be clearer at that time and because we prefer to hold talks here in Wash under circumstances comparable to de Lattre talks of last Sep.

We will not attempt in this msg to comment on detailed portions urtel 2224 except to state that we agree in gen with your observations and suggested remedial action. Separate comment will fol on specific sections reftel.

Interested Offroy's views outlined urtel 2216 May 10. If these represent evolution opinion young officials newly concerned IC, such as Janot and Dannaud, we are encouraged. Nevertheless we find views reflect understandable inexperience with IC scene and certain amount youthful verve which we doubt is shared by FonOff and Fr Govt.

Reurtel 2218 May 10, para 3. Dept does not approve proposal hold ministerial level talks with Fr in Saigon or Dalat in foreseeable future. Present sched is, as stated, to listen to views to be expressed by Letourneau and Schuman to Secy in Paris and thereupon prepare position papers for use in detailed talks with Letourneau in Wash in June. Background analysis you have provided in reftels will be used to full advantage at that time. Thereafter and dependent upon outcome Letourneau conversations Wash, Dept will instruct Leg what further steps are to be taken in Saigon with Huu, Bao Dai and Letourneau.

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[2] It was announced in Saigon on May 15 that High Commissioner Letourneau had accepted an invitation from the Department of State to visit Washington. The trip was expected to occur in June.

Perhaps these can be planned to take place during visit Saigon Asst Secy Allison tentatively sched for late summer

ACHESON

611.51G/5-2052

The Secretary of Defense (Lovett) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 20 May 1952.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: There is inclosed a memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which sets forth their views and comments on the State Department Draft "Postion Paper on Indochina for Discussions With the French and the British", dated 15 May 1952.[1]

I concur with the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, I should like to make it explicit that the concurrence of the Department of Defense in Paragraph 8 of the basic paper is without prejudice to the further development in the National Security Council, in connection with NSC 124,[2] of a more constructive long-range United States policy toward Indochina.

Sincerely yours, ROBERT A. LOVETT

[Enclosure]

Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Lovett)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 19 May 1952.

Subject: State Department Draft Position Paper on Indochina.

1. Reference is made to your memorandum of 16 May 1952,[3] forwarding a Department of State draft position paper on Indochina. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have studied this position paper and their views thereon are set forth below.

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, although concurring generally with the basic paper, consider that it contains certain statements which

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[1] The draft of May 15 is described in footnote 1, p. 144.

The modifications proposed in the attached memorandum were incorporated into the interdepartmentally approved version of the position paper, SCEM D-6/11, May 21 (*infra*), with one exception. In a letter of May 23, Secretary of State Acheson informed Secretary Lovett that the Department of State found acceptable the comments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the exception of point 2*a* of their memorandum. Acheson pointed out that informal interdepartmental discussions had already resulted in agreed changes in paragraph 7 of the draft position paper. (611.51G/5-2052) These agreed changes are reflected in interdepartmentally approved paper SCEM D-6/11.

[2] Reports in the NSC 124 series concerning United States objectives and courses of action in Southeast Asia and related documentation are included in material on general U.S. policies with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII.

[3] Not found in Department of State files.

could be taken as an implication that the United States would accept the basic French and British military concept of operations to meet overt aggression by Communist China in Indochina. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff find two United States military commitments which they feel should not be accepted without qualification. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff note that the paper contains certain material of an intelligence nature which cannot be wholly supported and which therefore should be amended. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff feel it to be necessary to suggest certain specific changes in language which follow (changes indicated in the usual manner):[4]

a. Change the fourth sentence of paragraph 7 to read:

> "We will undertake to ~~make every effort to~~ provide the necessary military equipment for such a program."

Reason: It would be injudicious to convey the impression to France and the United Kingdom that the United States will make "every" effort to provide such equipment inasmuch as our efforts will of necessity have to be consistent with our commitments world-wide. As originally written, the statement implies strongly that a program for Indochina might receive a priority as high or higher than Korea and United States defense needs;

b. Change the fifth sentence of paragraph 7 to read:

> "We are prepared to undertake such assistance to the French in the training of the national armies as, after discussion with the French and Associated States, may prove to be appropriate and desirable."

Reason: To remove any implication that the United States is assuming French responsibilities in this area.

c. Change the third, fourth, and last sentences of paragraph 10 to read:

> "We do not believe that the USSR is ~~ready~~ willing to accept the grave risks of general war which could grow out of such a Chinese Communist action. We believe, ~~therefore~~ for these and for other reasons, that a Chinese Communist attack on Indochina now is improbable. We also believe that development of the general strength of the Associated States with the continued support of the Western Powers can eventually diminish the possibility of such an attack."

Reason: (1) The Joint Chiefs of Staff doubt if current intelligence would support the statement quoted above as to the readiness of the USSR for general war. On the other hand, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would not object to a statement as to the probable unwillingness of the USSR in this regard;

(2) The change in the fourth sentence recommended above is made in the interest of accuracy. For instance, despite the importance of

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[4] I.e. deletions struck through; additions underscored.

Indochina, it is unlikely that its present economic and strategic importance both to Peiping and Moscow is great enough to dictate a large-scale Chinese Communist invasion; * and

(3) The last sentence could be taken to imply that the indigenous peoples of the Associated States could develop sufficient general strength which of itself would be a deterrent to aggression. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the importance to the Western World of Indochina is such as to require a clear understanding of the necessity of rendering continued political, economic, and military support to insure the integrity of that area;

d. Change the second sentence in paragraph 13 to read:

> "The United States would expect to provide the major force for the latter two tasks but would expect its Allies ~~to render such assistance as might be practicable~~ to provide at least token forces therefor and to render such other assistance as is normal by allies.’

Reason: The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that participation by France and the United Kingdom in all phases of the action against Communist China is necessary in order to give proof of the military solidarity of the Western World and to avoid the implication of unilateral action on the part of the United States against the mainland of China. Further, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would expect that United States forces would be accorded the right to use certain British and/or French bases and facilities as appropriate to or necessary for the conduct of the operations against the mainland.

e. Change the first sentence of paragraph 14 to read:

> "The U.S., in the event of a Chinese Communist attack on Indochina, would, together with its Allies, undertake what it believes to be the minimum necessary reaction to such an attack, but would have no ~~intention of undertaking~~ desire to undertake general hostilities against Communist China."

Reason: The original statement is categorical as to United States intentions and if taken out of context would tend to commit the United States to a policy of refraining from general hostilities against Communist China under any circumstances. The recommended change will bring the sentence into consonance with the remainder of the paragraph;

f. Insert a new second sentence in paragraph 14 to read:

> "However, as long as hostilities continue in Korea, the strategic relationship between Korea and Southeast Asia must be recognized."

Reason: In order not to overlook the fact that a direct connection exists between operations in both areas.

g. Change the last sentence of paragraph 15 to read:

> "We believe that the USSR will be less likely to make war ~~on the Western powers~~ over China alone to the degree that the Western Powers refrain from the conduct of operations against

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*See NIE 35/1, dated 3 March 1952. [Footnote in the source text.]

> China ~~are designed to strike against Chinese Communist capabilities to wage war in the particular areas involved, i.e., to minimize or avoid provocative attacks on~~ in areas of China proximate to the USSR, ~~and to the degree that the USSR does not believe that the Peiping regime is threatened with destruction.~~"

Reason: As originally written the sentence is so broad as to be subject to diverse and contradictory interpretations. Taken together with the preceding sentence, it can be construed as inhibiting any action on the part of the Western World other than that confined to the battle area, a restrictive concept which is wholly unacceptable from the military point of view. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the British and French could rationalize this sentence as unqualified support of their concept of operations in Indochina, which is limited to a resolute defense in the battle area. In any event, as originally worded it is an assertion of Soviet intentions which can be made self-serving according to whatever interpretation is placed upon it.

3. Subject to the modifications set forth in the preceding paragraph, the Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that the basic paper is a suitable statement of the United States position with respect to Indochina.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
OMAR N. BRADLEY
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 110

Position Paper Prepared in the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 21, 1952.
SCEM D-6/11

BACKGROUND PAPER ON INDOCHINA FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FRENCH AND THE BRITISH

1. The U.S. recognizes the fact that French efforts in Indochina are a major contribution to the defense of the Free World against communist aggression, to the security of the Far East, and to the common objectives of France and the United States.

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[1] This paper was one in a series prepared as background information for the use of the Secretary of State in discussions with the British and the French during his forthcoming trip to Europe (May 22–30) in connection with the signing of contractual agreements with the Federal Republic of Germany. The paper was a revision of the draft prepared by Charles C. Stelle of the Policy Planning Staff, dated May 15, which is described in footnote 1, p. 144. The covering memorandum of explanation accompanying the source text states that this paper had been approved by the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Office of the Director for Mutual Security. It had been amended in accordance with the views and comments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see JCS memorandum of May 19, *supra*). (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 110)

2. The U.S. realizes that the role which France is now playing in Indochina is indispensable to the preservation of the area from Communist control and to the development of indigenous strength and stability in the Associated States.

3. The U.S. understands the burdens which France is carrying and the sacrifices which France is making in Indochina. The U.S. shares with France grave concern over the continued drain on French manpower and treasure arising from the Indochina struggle, and the difficulties which the French effort in Indochina places in the way of the development of military strength and economic well being in France itself.

4. The U.S. shares with France the determination that these French burdens and sacrifices will be alleviated by the development, under French leadership, of indigenous political capabilities, a sound economy and military strength in the Associated States.

5. We understand the difficulties which are offered to the development of the Associated States by: the slowness of the States Governments to assume the responsibilities which have devolved upon them from the French; the lack of strong indigenous leadership; the apathetic and "fence-sitting" attitude of the bulk of the population; the lingering suspicion on the part of the population of regimes which they conceive to be supported by their former colonial masters; the difficulty of training administrative personnel; the failure of factional and sectional groups to unite in a concerted national effort; and the lack of diplomatic support from other Asian governments. We also understand the difficulties in terms of shortage of officers, apathy of the population, recruiting problems, and training problems which must be overcome in building up the national armies of the Associated States.

6. We believe that the key to the development of the strength of the Associated States lies in the development of these Indochinese armies. We believe that political stability will in large measure flow from the development and maintenance of strong national armies. We believe such armies will represent an attribute of sovereignty and independence which will be most apt to capture the imagination of the indigenous population. And it is only through the development of such armies that the burden on French military manpower can be lightened and that the Associated States will eventually be enabled to maintain themselves without major external assistance.

7. We are therefore prepared to undertake a special program of assistance to the national armies with the objective of assisting the French to develop them at a more rapid rate to a level of increased strength. We conceive of this program as one which involves develop-

ment of divisions over and above those presently programmed or planned for the national armies and which would involve U.S. assistance over and above that presently programmed for the French and Associated States effort in Indochina. Subject to Congressional action, we are prepared to contribute such assistance as can be usefully and efficiently devoted to such a program, to an upper limit of $250,000,000. We are prepared to undertake such assistance to the French in the training of the National armies, as, after discussions with the French and the Associated States, may prove to be appropriate and desirable. We will welcome French views as to the practicability of a program of more rapid development of the National Armies, the magnitude and rate of increase in strength which are feasible, and the best ways of proceeding with such a program and of applying U.S. assistance to it most effectively.

"*Footnote:* It is understood that we would be prepared, if necessary, to shift up to $250 million from other economic and military aid programs for fiscal year 1953, largely from Title I, to the Indochina program. The ultimate apportionment of cuts must be made after the NATO annual review."

8. We believe that, to be successful, the increase of the National Armies must be supported and accompanied by progress in the general political, economic, and social development of the Associated States. We believe, and would like to be confirmed in our belief, that the French will give sympathetic consideration to such views as the U.S. may have to offer on the various problems connected with the general development of the Associated States. We would like to feel free to discuss with the French our views on such matters as: the possibility of further French statements on the hopes which France holds for the evolutionary development of the Associated States; the possibility of undertaking such changes in the organization of the French representation in Indochina as may be conducive to an increased feeling of responsibility on the part of the Associated States; further development of the March 8 and Pau accords; possible lines of development of the relationships within the French Union which have to do with Indochina, and ways in which the U.S. can cooperate with the French in publicizing developments in Indochina. We should also like to feel free to discuss with the French and with the Associated States such matters as the ways in which Bao Dai can contribute more effectively to the development of Vietnam; the possibility of early formation of an Assembly and a gradual increase of its powers; methods of increasing efficiency and decreasing corruption in the governments of the Associated States; methods of promoting land reform, agrarian and industrial credit, sound rice marketing

systems, labor development, foreign trade, and capital formation. In sum, we would like to be assured that our views on any aspect of the Indochinese situation may be offered in the expectation that they will be given sympathetic consideration.

9. We have no doubt that the French Government is firm in its intention to continue to carry out the mission with which it is charged in Indochina. We believe that official and public reassurances by the French that they have no intention of abandoning or compromising their mission in Indochina would be useful in removing the unwarranted suspicions of possible French negotiations with the Vietminh which might otherwise handicap the development of confidence on the part of the Associated States, and lessen the effectiveness and possibilities of U.S. assistance.

10. We recognize the dangers to the French and Associated States and to the British position in the Far East which are inherent in the existence of a hostile and aggressive Communist China and in the possibility of Chinese Communist aggression. We estimate that it is highly improbable that the Chinese Communists would undertake large scale action against Indochina without having the firmest assurances of support from the USSR. We do not believe that the USSR is willing to accept the grave risks of general war which could grow out of such a Chinese Communist action. We believe for these and for other reasons, that a Chinese Communist attack on Indochina now is improbable. We also believe that development of the general strength of the Associated States with the combined support of the Western Powers can eventually diminish the possibility of such an attack.

11. We believe that the possibility of Chinese Communist aggression against Indochina would have the gravest of consequences, that such aggression would be met by immediate and resolute action on the part of France, the United Kingdom, and the U.S., and that it may not be possible to limit the scope of such action.

12. The U.S. is prepared to join in such a warning. It believes that such a warning will lessen the possibility of a Chinese aggression against Indochina. It must be recognized by the French and the British, however, that the delivery of such a warning by the three powers, would carry with it the obligation to take necessary action in the event, however unlikely, that the warning was disregarded by the Chinese Communists. In this event the U.S. would feel obligated, and would hold its allies obligated to undertake the necessary actions.

13. The U.S. believes that the minimum necessary reaction to a Chinese Communist attack on Indochina would include: a resolute defense of Indochina itself to which the United States would provide such assistance from its Air Force and Navy as might be practicable

but no ground forces; air attack on Chinese Communist communication lines; and possibly a naval blockade of the Chinese Communist coast. The United States would expect to provide the major force for the latter two tasks but would expect its Allies to provide at least token forces therefor and to render such other assistance as is normal by Allies. The U.S. believes that there should be a common view between it and its Allies as to what would be involved in the minimum necessary reaction to a Chinese Communist attack on Indochina before the three powers join in delivery of a warning against such an attack.

14. The U.S., in the event of a Chinese Communist attack on Indochina, would, together with its Allies, undertake what it believes to be the minimum necessary reaction to such an attack, but would have no desire to undertake general hostilities against Communist China. However, as long as hostilities continue in Korea, the strategic relationship between Korea and Southeast Asia must be recognized. It is obvious, however, that if hostilities were to arise out of overt Chinese Communist aggression there could be no guarantee that the Chinese Communists might not, by their own actions, make it necessary for general hostilities to be undertaken in counteraction to Chinese Communist measures. It is necessary that there be understanding between the Allies that if such general hostilities become necessary it would be incumbent upon all three Powers to take common action.

15. The U.S. is no less reluctant than the French or the British to undertake actions which might lead to USSR intervention. Even if general hostilities with Communist China become unavoidable the U.S. will still, to the degree that it may be feasible, follow a course of action designed to minimize the likelihood of USSR intervention. We believe that the USSR will be less likely to make war over China alone to the degree that the Western Powers refrain from the conduct of operations against China in areas of China proximate to the USSR.

751G.00/5–2352 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, May 23, 1952—7:06 p.m.

Telac 2. For the Secretary.[1] Fol is text of memo addressed to you by FE[2] which failed to receive concurrences of G and SP until after your departure: Subj White House Conf on May 19 with Pres, Mr. Lovett and Gen Bradley re Indochina and Berlin. Text fols:

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[1] Secretary of State Acheson left Washington on May 22 for Bonn. He was in Paris from May 26 to May 29, returning to Washington on May 30.

[2] This communication was directed to the Secretary of State by John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, on May 21.

It is believed that for purposes of reconciling the various briefing and background papers pertaining to IC which have been prepared for your forthcoming discussions in Paris and Bonn it wld be useful if the fol résumé was submitted for your guidance.

It is our understanding that at the White House Conf referred to above it was agreed that the subjs to be discussed with the Fr and Brit re IC cld be reduced to four major topics:

(1) We are in favor of further development of the natl armies of the Assoc States and are prepared to furnish further assist toward that end.

(2) The Fr and Brit shld be informed that we are in favor of the issuance of a warning to Commie Chi concerning further aggression in SEA and wish to work out the context, time and method by which specific internal changes in IC except as they re financial aid to Fr This means, among other things, that we will agree to take part in the tripartite mil conversations which will undoubtedly be proposed.

(3) As large a measure of agreement as is possible shld be reached re the reaction to be anticipated from the Peking regime fol the issuance of the warning and the courses of action open to the US. UK and Fr if the warning statement is ignored.

(4) We will seek to avoid engagement with the Fr concerning specific internal changes in IC except as they re financial aid to Fr for development of the natl armies and form a basis for the discussions to be held in Wash with Min Letourneau in June.

No reference was made at the White House to the possibility that you might be faced with a request from the UK that we agree to bilateral mil conversations with them prior to the trilateral conversations.

It was stated that you wld avoid ref to any specific sum in referring to additional financial aid to be provided to the Fr.

It was also stated that you wld seek to avoid any detailed discussion of the mil aspects of retaliation, referring such matters to the proposed trilateral mil conversations.

Aside from the above observations, the briefing papers included in your book dealing with this subject

1. SCEM D-5/2b "Southeast Asia" (as amended May 20)[3]

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[3] SCEM D-5/2b read in part as follows:

"Position to Be Presented:

"It is recommended that the Secretary advise the French and the British that the U.S. Government will be prepared to continue military staff discussions of these problems [measures for the defense of Southeast Asia] at an early date on a tripartite basis (probably at Paris). He may add that U.S. participation in these discussions is agreed to. He may add that, as both British and French Governments already know, it is the intention of the U.S. to make the largest contribution in the military (short of the use of ground forces), political and economic sense to the stabilization and defense of Southeast Asia consistent with its great commitments elsewhere." (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 110)

2. SCEM D–5/1c "Possible Fr Request for Additional Aid" (as amended May 20)[4] are to serve as negot papers, and the background paper

SCEM D–6/11, May 21, "Background Paper on IC for Discussions with the Fr and Brit" (as amended May 20 fol receipt of views and comments of the JCS)[5] as a background paper.

BRUCE

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[4] SCEM D–5/1c, not printed, recommended that in view of the interest of the United States in French fulfillment of their NATO commitments and in the continuation of the French effort in Indochina, the Secretary of State should indicate, should the French raise the issue, that the U.S. was willing to consider with France what means might be available to increase aid in calendar year 1952, in connection with the development of the national armies of the Associated States. An annex to the paper summarized the existing status of the national armies. (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 110)

[5] *Supra.*

751G.5 MSP/5–2852 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PRIORITY SAIGON, May 28, 1952—noon.
[Received 6:39 a. m.]

2351. Rptd info Paris 729, Hanoi unnumbered. Re Legtel 1548, Feb 6.[1]

Legation has noted from time to time French expression of disappointment with volume American military aid delivered in IC.

In IC we have, we believe, made progress in checking such distortion. MAAG and Legation have gotten over facts which speak for themselves to French General Staff, High Commissariat, local press and infrequent meetings. Matériel on docks and procession of incoming ships spell out best story.

In addition, Salan has given me his personal assurance that he will try to prevent rise of any polemic in local press and as evidence his intentions staged extensive and effective ceremonies today in connection with arrival of 150th ship.[2]

Legation believes wider publicity required on volume of matériel delivered to date. In this connection Legation repeats request Legtel 1548, Feb 6 for release fol figures to press of matériel updated to include arrival 150th ship:

a. Over 130,000 tons of all types of MDAP equipment and supplies.
b. Over 53 million rounds of ammunition.

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[1] Telegram 1548 from Saigon, Feb. 6, not printed, contained the text of a proposed press release describing the amount and nature of U.S. aid to French Union forces in Indochina. (751G.5 MSP/2–652)

[2] The ceremonies were reported in telegram 2363 from Saigon, May 29, not printed. General Salan, Premier Huu, Cambodian and Laotian representatives, and Minister Heath delivered remarks during the course of proceedings. The Minister informed Washington that the ceremonies were impressive and received widespread local notice. (751G.5/5–2952)

c. Over 8,000 transport vehicles and trailers.
d. Over 650 combat vehicles.
e. Over 200 military aircraft.
f. Over 200 naval craft.
g. Over 3,500 radio sets.
h. Over 14,000 automatic weapons.

I must point out, however, that Chief MAAG still objects strongly to release of figures unless authorized by OSD and points out that similar info on CCF supply is treated by US authorities here as secret. French have no objection to release of figures.

Legation receiving constant requests for some concrete info on military aid and plans to use figures as background for foreign correspondents, including those of Paris dailies. Also, figures wld be of aid in continuing forthright but tactful info efforts including stories of ship arrivals and MAAG inspection trips.

Since now developing publicity for background on US aid, wld appreciate earliest Dept's reaction and necessary authorization to release of such statistics as cited above.

HEATH

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 108

United States Minute of Tripartite Foreign Ministers Meeting With France and the United Kingdom at the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, May 28, 1952, 10:30 a.m.[1]

TOP SECRET

SCEM MIN-2, Part One

Participants:

France: M. Pinay
M. Queuille[2]
M. Robert Schuman
M. Pleven
M. Letourneau
M. Maurice Schumann[3]
M. Parodi
M. de la Tournelle[4]
M. Gaillard[5]
M. Sauvagnargues[6]

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[1] Secretary Acheson was in Paris from May 26 to May 29. Other conversations in which he participated, dealing with European problems and Southeast Asia, are documented in the appropriate compilations in volumes v, vi, and xii. The discussion on Indochina was summarized in telegram 7415 from Paris, May 28, not printed. (751G.00/5–2852)

[2] Henri Queuille, Vice-Premier of France.

[3] French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

[4] Guy Le Roy de la Tournelle, Director General of Political and Economic Affairs, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[5] Felix Gaillard, French Secretary of State for Finance.

[6] Jean Sauvagnargues, Officer in Charge of German Affairs, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

U.K.: Mr. Eden
Sir Oliver Harvey[7]
Sir Pierson Dixon[8]
Mr. Hayter[9]
Mr. Roberts[10]
Mr. Shuckburgh[11]

U.S.: The Secretary
Ambassador Dunn
Ambassador Gifford
Ambassador Jessup
Mr. Perkins[12]
Mr. Achilles[13]
Mr. Knight[14]
Mr. Sprouse
Miss Kirkpatrick

Subject: Indochina

Mr. Pinay: We welcome the foreign representatives and the French Government is happy to have an opportunity to study with them the problems under consideration.

Mr. Schuman: It has been agreed to begin with the discussions of Indochinese and Far Eastern matters. There are two problems relating to Indochina: (1) military and financial aid, which has been gone into previously, and (2) the general strategic problem, which should be examined now.

Mr. Pinay: Former Prime Minister Faure raised at Lisbon the question: Do our Allies consider Indochina a specific French problem or an international problem?

Mr. Pleven: The policy expressed yesterday in the EDC treaty[15] calls for a rapid increase of French military power. What are the obstacles? The first is the size of the French effort in Indochina, which is not just for the protection of French interests but for the protection of a point of strategic importance in Southeast Asia. A rapid increase in French military power also faces financial obstacles. France can use only ⅔ of its military expenditures for European defense. 447 billion francs will be used this year in Indochina, leaving only 830 billion francs for Europe and North Africa. France must build up more divisions. Manpower is no problem but there is the problem of cadres. 8209 of our regular officers and more than 40,000 of our regular NCO's are in Indochina, thus immobilizing in Indochina 26% of our regular officers and 37% of our NCO's. If Indochina were defended purely for French interests, it would not be worth the effort. As is true of Korea, we are, however, defending an area of interest to the free world. France has tried to find solutions. I discussed these matters with President Truman when I was in Washington and Marshal de Lattre also discussed them during his visit to Washington.[16] If it is not possible to find a total solution, we have tried to find at least a partial solution by the creation of Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian national armies, with, of course, the help of the French army. Our object is to build up national armies which would total 174,000 for Vietnam, 16,000 for Cambodia and 17,000 for Laos. There would be approximately 200,000 men in these armies. Progress has been made in this regard. However, almost the whole of the burden has been borne by France. United States aid has been greatly appreciated. Up to April 1952 US aid of an estimated value of 124 billion francs has been delivered to Indochina, but if this aid remains within these limits France cannot do more. The military situation is now comparatively satisfactory and Mr. Letourneau will give more details. The Indochina problem is intimately linked to the European problem and this raises the EDC question. French military strength must be increased and French forces must be equal to or greater than German forces. Therefore, Indochina is at the heart of the problem of European defense.

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[7] British Ambassador in France.

[8] Deputy Under Secretary of State, British Foreign Office.

[9] William Hayter, British Minister at Paris.

[10] Frank Roberts, Deputy Under Secretary of State (German Affairs), British Foreign Office.

[11] Charles Shuckburgh, Private Secretary to Eden.

[12] George W. Perkins, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs.

[13] Theodore C. Achilles, Minister at Paris.

[14] Ridgway B. Knight, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Western European Affairs.

[15] The Treaty establishing the European Defense Community was signed by the Foreign Ministers of six European nations in Paris on May 27. For documentation on this subject, see volume v.

Mr. Letourneau: During the 18 months since the French have with Bao Dai worked on building up the Indochinese national armies, 40 Vietnamese battalions have been created. At present 20 of these battalions have more or less no French officers; 24 battalions have territorial responsibilities; and 11 battalions have engaged in combat operations. Their performance has been very satisfactory, including those battalions with only Vietnamese officers. Since the end of last year the Vietnamese General Staff has been formed with a Vietnamese General named as Chief of Staff. The following are the limits on French action in this connection:

(1) Financial—The Vietnamese army in 1952 received only 17 billion francs from the Vietnamese Government and France must make up the difference between that and the 100 billion francs called for in the Vietnamese budget.

(2) Cadres—The Vietnamese national army has 1449 officers and 6181 NCO's. It is calling up certain categories of students for re-

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[16] Documentation on the discussions on Indochina which occurred during the visits to the United States of René Pleven (then Premier) in January 1951, and of General de Lattre de Tassigny in September 1951, is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1951 vol. VI, Part 1, pp. 332 ff.

serve officer training. Vietnamese Government cooperation has been good and it has now extended this training period from four months to 12 months.

(3) Arming and equipping the Vietnamese army—We are very grateful for United States aid, without which the Vietnamese army could not have achieved its present development. The 150th ship delivering United States aid recently arrived at Saigon and the amount of aid now delivered is above the figures given by Mr. Pleven.

France still has, however, the major military responsibility. We are pleased with the cooperation of the Associated States. The decision by Marshal de Lattre to build up these national armies caused some concern here but the risks have been overcome, at least for the present. Cambodia now has an army of 10,500 men including 90 officers and 850 NCO's, consisting of 6 battalions and one parachute unit. Laos has an army of 9,650 men, including 85 officers and 500 NCO's, consisting of 5 battalions and one parachute battalion. The chief problem is that of training higher officers; it is much easier to train the subordinate officers.

With respect to the military situation, in January and February the situation in the north was a cause for concern. The Hoa Binh evacuation was not understood in the international press. French Union troops there were immobilized and the Vietminh were able to infiltrate the Delta. The purpose of the evacuation was to permit the use of these previously immobilized troops. At that time there were 25,000 regular Vietminh Troops in the Delta. All the Vietminh regulars in the Delta have now been more or less cleared up and the "Bataille du Riz" is turning in favor of the French Union forces. In central and south Vietnam and in Laos and Cambodia the situation is less disquieting and there are no Vietminh regular units of any size.

With respect to Communist China considerable aid is still coming to the Vietminh and the Vietminh are unable to recuperate in Chinese territory. Vietminh cadres have been trained by Chinese Communists. The Vietminh forces now show signs of weariness. They are finding it difficult to replace their losses and their troops are now of an inferior quality and include many new young soldiers. The French command feels that the present situation is favorable to inflicting further losses on the Vietminh but with Communist China in the background we cannot foresee the possibility of any decisive military action in the near future.

Mr. Pleven: There are two points in the Indochina problem which I wish to raise. Do our Allies regard the French effort as one for French national considerations or for Allied interests? Do our friends feel that the French sacrifices for the defense of this area are justified by the political and strategic importance of that part of the world?

We have obtained no clear reply to these questions although they have been previously brought up, for example, by General Juin at Washington. If it is felt that the global strategic effort should continue, France cannot continue to bear alone such a considerable share of this burden.

Mr. Schuman: It is not a question so much of how much aid and support France might receive. It is now not just a matter of aid but of cooperation and association in a common cause, a distribution of the burden and of strategic responsibility.

Mr. Pinay: Could we have a reply to Mr. Pleven's questions?

The Secretary: To repeat Mr. Pleven's question: Do France's Allies regard the French effort in Indochina as purely in French interests or in general Allied interests and What is the strategic importance of Indochina. I can say for the United States that there is no question in our minds. The French effort is not made in purely French interest but in the general international interest. The same is true of the United States effort in Korea and the British effort in Malaya and Suez, which has caused difficulties with Egypt. They are all made in a common interest and all have great consequences in international terms, all intimately affect the efforts of each in other parts of the world. In each situation the initial responsibility lies with the United States in Korea, with France in Indochina and with the United Kingdom in Malaya and the function of the Allies is to aid and support in all possible ways. "Does the United States regard the French effort as of great strategic importance?" The answer is "Yes". It is essential for our security not just in the Far East but also in the Middle East and Europe. Failure would have important repercussions in Japan, Korea, Indonesia, India and perhaps in the Middle East.

Mr. Eden: I am impressed by the French efforts to create the Vietnamese national army. There is a close relation between the United Kingdom situation in Malay and the French problem in Indochina and I am pleased that Mr. Malcolm MacDonald has had close contacts with Mr. Letourneau. These are parts of the world-wide struggle and the United Kingdom must also keep open lines of communication as of vital importance to all these efforts. The Malayan problem is essentially a Chinese problem. The United Kingdom accepts the importance of Asia. Each of us must carry some burden in addition to our European burden—the United States in Korea, the French in Indochina and the United Kingdom in Malaya and Suez—and each must aid the other to the extent possible.

The Secretary: The United States thought it a wise decision when it was decided to create the Vietnamese national army and we have in the past given vigorous support. We would be happy to go into the question of increasing our aid to the Associated States armies.

(Discussion at this point indicated that the French objective was to create 8 Vietnamese divisions and that the Vietnamese now have six divisions.) These armies are not an immediate solution but they point to the road to follow, the creation of forces to maintain their independence and to relieve the French forces in Indochina. We are impressed with the importance of the Associated States national armies and will be willing to go into the question of increasing our aid with Mr. Letourneau in Washington. It should be noted that deliveries of aid are already constantly increasing. I am not able today, because Congress is now considering the bill for aid, to discuss figures. If the bill gets through Congress—although it may be reduced in amount, we will use every effort to hold down the reductions. I believe it will permit an increase in this aid. There are two matters for discussion: (1) What will be the nature of the aid—that is what is to be furnished. and (2) the amount. We can talk in Mid-June better than now and should have some figure to deal with, although it may not be final.

Another matter we might discuss with Mr. Letourneau is whether our MAAG is effective and how it can be improved. Mr. Heath and General Brink will be in Washington during Mr. Letourneau's visit and we would be interested in having Mr. Letourneau's suggestions in this regard.

Mr. Pleven: This raises the question of legislative flexibility and of the form of the bill in Congress and whether the American administration can increase the aid. It seems that in the past one hindrance to aid to the national armies has been the legislative restrictions. It is impossible for France to increase its effort in Indo-China and the French Government desires to free the appropriations for Indo-China for use in Europe.

The Secretary: Mr. Nash[17] says that he believes that the present bill has increased flexibility and that we can move in that direction, away from purely military items. Petroleum products, for example, might be possible.

Mr. Letourneau: Before I proceed to Washington and in order that I may be prepared for discussion, can the American Embassy at Paris keep me informed regarding the measure of legislative flexibility and regarding what items we can discuss in Washington?

The Secretary: That can be done. I suggest that Mr. Letourneau tell us what items the French Government has in mind.

The next question is what should be the attitude of the three powers if the situation becomes worse and the Chinese Communists take a more active part in the IC conflict. As I said to Mr. Schuman and Mr. Eden at Lisbon, the United States Government would work to clarify in its own mind its position preparatory to discussion with the UK and France. We are now prepared to go forward with discussions, politically, militarily or in any other way, for working out a joint position. Tentatively, it is the U.S. position—and we agree with the French and the British that the important thing is to prevent rather than act afterwards—to issue a joint warning to the Chinese Communists. We can later discuss whether it should be public or private. We think it important to talk about what we should do if the warning is disregarded and that it is dangerous to issue a warning without knowing what we would do if it were disregarded. We would agree that whatever conclusions are reached they should be kept secret in order to leave the enemy in doubt. I suggest in a preliminary way that what we do not be limited to resisting, for example, in Indo-China a Chinese Communist attack. Action should be taken against the Chinese Communists. We cannot necessarily agree on all action in all eventualities but initial action at the outset should be considered. For example, attacks on lines of communications contributing to the attack on Indo-China and naval action. We should first discuss these matters in political talks and then in military talks, perhaps at Paris. While not wishing to anticipate the military talks, the United States would not be able to contribute ground forces for Southeast Asia but would expect to bear a considerable share of the air and naval effort. It is essential that no leaks occur regarding the fact that we are considering such a warning.

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[17] Frank C. Nash, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

Mr. Eden: As I stated at Columbia University, Chinese Communist aggression in Indo-China should be considered as comparable to that in Korea and the United Nations would take measures in that event. We could not be committed now regarding military action to be taken by the United Nations. I hope that no such aggression takes place and the question of issuing the warning needs further discussions. I reserve my position and would wish to discuss this matter with my colleagues.

Mr. Schuman: I thank Mr. Acheson for what he envisages in this connection and agree in the main. This problem is independent of things we have discussed in the past. Like Mr. Eden, I hope that no such aggression will occur but sudden aggression is not impossible. The *Ad Hoc* Military Committee at Washington[18] studied this question but the other Governments' views are not known to us. It is very wise to prevent action but the timing and form of the warning should be discussed as it might provoke an attack. It should not enable the enemy to use such a warning as a pretext to extend the conflict.

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[18] The report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee of military representatives, Feb. 5, and related documentation are included in material on general United States policies with respect to the East Asian-Pacific area in volume XII.

Mr. Letourneau: The French Government approved the conclusions of the *Ad Hoc* Committee about one month ago but we do not know the political views of the US and the UK. If the US and the UK could examine these conclusions and tell us, it would be useful to know their political conclusions. Mr. Eden referred to United Nations action, but as the Minister responsible for Indo-China I would like to note the permanent danger we face there—although not immediately probable. We must prepare our defense in the event of aggression. The United Nations procedure is lengthy and in the meantime we would face mortal danger to our troops and civilians. Therefore, the political and military talks should include immediate measures along the lines of the *Ad Hoc* Committee recommendations.

Mr. Eden: As I said at New York, United Nations action is envisaged. I cannot personally commit my Government now. But Mr. Acheson has suggested that all these matters be included in the talks.

Mr. Pinay: With respect to the principles set forth by Mr. Acheson, I am in agreement. Each of us—the United States in Korea, the UK in Malaya and France in Indo-China—has its individual problems and responsibilities but each is part of the overall and we must note the disparity of our means. France has fought in Indo-China for six years and we feel that we are justified in asking for aid.

The proposed warning to the Chinese Communists might start or extend the war. China is a huge country with hundreds of millions of people. As in the last war bombing did not end the conflict but only a massive landing rid us of the Germans. Air action is not enough and there seems no possibility of ending the war. Korea proves this. I should like to ask if the US and the UK have considered whether negotiations might possibly end the war.

Mr. Eden: I agree regarding the desirability of being ready to negotiate, but the example given by Korea is not promising. The US has been very patient and the concessions have all been made on the United Nations side. Mr. Acheson suggested the issuance of a warning for consideration and it is worth considering and examining the possibility.

The Secretary: Sudden large scale intervention is probably not likely, but increased US aid may be followed by increased Chinese Communist aid. It might, therefore, be advisable at some point to say to the Chinese Communists that this must stop.

Mr. Pleven: I wish to ask again regarding the US and UK views regarding the conclusions of the *Ad Hoc* Committee. These are extremely important if sudden aggression should take place. We have the problem of evacuation of civilians. There has been no Vietminh air force to date but an armistice in Korea might free the Chinese Communist air force. Creation of the national armies decreased the chances of Chinese aggression by lessening the propaganda value to them of having white Europeans to attack. It removes a weapon from them in terms of propaganda.

Mr. Eden: I cannot comment on the *Ad Hoc* Committee conclusions except to say that they have been examined.

The Secretary: The *Ad Hoc* Committee actually presented no recommendations but reached different conclusions. No political guidance was given to the military members of this Committee. We might give tentative guidance or suggestions under certain hypotheses to the Committee and then the Ministers could later examine these problems in their ensemble.

Mr. Schuman: The psychological point is very important—aid could be foreseen if aggression occurred—but it is important to know plans are being made.

Mr. Pleven: The constant preoccupation of the military in Tonkin is the possibility of a flood of Chinese across the border. The means of transportation and the evacuation of civilians are important and there are points in the *Ad Hoc* Committee's conclusions regarding the use of ports useful in organization of evacuation.

Mr. Letourneau: I suggest that we reach agreement on these conclusions of the *Ad Hoc* Committee, which did not give rise to differences of opinion, and for further progress political guidance should be given and an exchange of views should take place to that end.

The Secretary: It is best to examine the *Ad Hoc* Committee conclusions again. We can pick out certain points and say proceed with these and on other parts we could prepare tentative guidance for the military and thus clear up the difficulties. We will get up something and submit it to London and Paris to serve as guidance for the military.

Mr. Pleven: We have the responsibility of defending the EDC Treaty before the National Assembly and, if we are not able to show increased French participation, we will have difficulty in obtaining ratification, in obtaining approval for the military budget and for continuation of the effort in Indo-China. It is essential that our friends know that we must have a reply with respect to increased aid for the National Armies as quickly and as generously as possible.

Mr. Pinay: The French Government is unanimously behind Mr. Pleven in this statement. You must realize that the French public is weary and tired of the Indo-China war.

Mr. Schuman: There is considerable apprehension regarding the EDC in France and Germany does not have the Indo-China burden, thus establishing a disequilibrium. Germany will receive US aid without having to apply it to Indo-China. These are questions which will be raised in the National Assembly.

Mr. Pinay: We have exposed our views very frankly and have explained our concern. Mr. Letourneau will be able to proceed further with these questions in Washington. I ask that you take into account the political difficulties that Messrs. Pleven and Schuman will have to face in the National Assembly.

751G.00/6–152 : Telegram

The Minister at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, June 1, 1952—10 a. m.

2371. Rptd info Paris 734, Hanoi unnumbered. I saw Bao Dai at Banmethuot yesterday.

He was pleased over his Hanoi trip. He had ordered that school children shld not be turned out for his arrival thereby gaining blessings of parents. He had also ordered Gov not to round up "lot of peasants" to line streets and he had stipulated that route he wld follow from airport shld avoid main streets. He also ordered no welcome banners or posters be displayed. Nevertheless, people turned out in great numbers and enthusiasm then [*than*] on his previous highly organized visits. He was pleased with Gov Binh and thought latter was making good progress.

He was extremely dissatisfied, however, with governorship of Ly[1] in Annam who was "bien pauvre sire" (a weak type) whom he wld shortly get rid of. Security had gravely deteriorated in Annam. To some extent this was due to fact that regional militia no longer had local tactical autonomy as they had in time of Gov Giao but it was also due to inability of govt to influence and advise Fr Commander in Annam.

It was great mistake (1) for Fr to exercise exclusive tactical local command and (2) to expand reg army at expense of equally needed expansion of regional militia and police. It was true that Viet had no "grand strategists" and there was [in]sufficient consultation on level of Bao Dai and Def Min on plane of high strategy. But in local tactical situations Vietnamese counsel and command participation were urgently required.

I remarked that his Chief of Staff, Gen Hinh was opposed to expansion of militia and suggested that Bao Dai shld work out that problem direct with Hinh. Bao Dai said that it was true that Hinh still saw things too much from Fr mil angle and there was an actual conflict of views between Hinh and latter's father, Interior Min Tan [*Tam*] over use of militia and police. It was only Viet troops, militia and police who cld effectively undertake "pacification" of liberated area. The Fr African troops shld not be stationed in such areas since they cld not be effectively restrained from pillage and rapine. Fr seemed unwilling or unable to enforce discipline in this respect in their colonial troops and it was sad fact, that Vietnamese troops entirely under Fr command were now committing the same excesses as did African soldiers.

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[1] Tran Van Ly, Governor of Central Vietnam.

Reverting to his Hanoi trip, Bao Dai said he had been greatly disappointed in Tri. He had "dangled" before the latter the prospect of prime ministership. Tri had replied the only solution was an ultranatl govt and according Bao Dai had intimated that unless he, Tri, were entrusted with formation of such govt, there wld be disaster by end of year. Bao Dai said that attitude of people like Tri and Ngo Dinh Diem was utterly unrealistic and defeatist. Fr were carrying fin and mil burden and must continue to do so for two or three years. The urgent requirement was therefore to get along with Fr. Both Tri and Nguyen [*Ngo*] Dinh Diem were intoxicated with illusion of their personal popularity. Their popularity was not real. Tri had predicted that Tonkin wld fall apart if he were removed as gov. Nothing of the sort had occurred. Huu was also making vague threats about what wld happen if he were removed. Actually nothing wld happen. Bao Dai here interjected that he wld probably make a brief trip to France in June. I inquired whether govtl changes might be expected before his departure. He indicated that there might be but did not directly commit himself.

In talk later with Nguyey [*Nguyen*] De, the latter was confident that there wld be govt changes before Bao Dai's departure but he also avoided stating what changes wld be beyond saying that he felt sure "his" candidate for Min of Info, ex-gov Giao would be in office within few days.

De reiterated Bao Dai's statement re the prime necessity of working for Fr stating that when Fr and Western influence were withdrawn process of disaggregation wld begin immed in Vietnam. Viet had bright future but it now needed Fr and Western help.

Bao Dai's Adjutant who returned with me in plane volunteered same thesis on beneficence of Fr contribution and influence and stupidity of so-called natls who thought Vietnam cld be saved without Fr help.

I was rather struck with fact that De and Adjutant who in past frequently expressed criticism of Fr action to me are now, as has Bao Dai in my last two interviews insisting on necessity of "getting along" with Fr.

HEATH

751G.00/6–352 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, June 3, 1952—8 p. m.

7532. Dept pass Saigon. Repeated info Saigon 419, London unnumbered. Saigon tels 2218, May 10 and 2224 May 12 and Deptel 6843 May 9[*19*] (Saigon 1789).

1. Emb agrees with Heath on necessity action revitalize IC situation as we are otherwise likely to face merely continuation present drain on French, accompanied by ever present danger Fr decision cut losses in IC. Program suggested by Heath should, however, be viewed against background Tunisian and Moroccan situations and what appears to be fairly widespread Fr resentment against "US intervention". Program carries with it danger further Fr resentment of what might be considered another instance "US intervention".

2. Emb is of opinion that if we are to be able to influence French to carry out program along lines suggested by Heath, with which we are in general agreement as means revitalizing situation to common benefit, we should propose such action at same time we discuss with Letourneau at Washington question increased US aid. As stated in Emb's comment on Department's position papers on possible Fr request for additional aid and background paper on IC (memo handed to Ridgway Knight at time recent tripartite talks here),[1] Emb believes we should have frank exchange views at time increased aid discussed and not repeat previous procedures of piecemeal approaches to Fr on IC policy questions. By linking discussion Heath's suggested program with discussions increased assistance, we are more likely obtain some acceptance our views and thus make them more palatable to Fr Govt and Natl Assembly. If Fr accept our suggestions for program of this nature, our responsibility as result of our having taken lead will be considerable and one of our major tasks will be make every effort insure Vietnamese do their share and not look upon Fr actions as signs weakness calling for efforts obtain further concessions.

3. While specific question was not raised by Fr during tripartite talks here, Fr Govt may have in mind possibility both material and financial aid IC national armies and this may have occasioned their interest in problem flexibility US legislation.

It will be recalled that in past Fr have suggested possibility US financial assistance pay maintenance costs IC natl armies.

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[1] Document SCEM D–5/1c concerning a possible request by France for additional aid is described in footnote 4, p. 156. For SCEM D–6/11, the background paper on Indochina, May 21, see p. 150. The memorandum handed to Ridgway B. Knight (Deputy Director of the Office of Western European Affairs, who accompanied the Secretary of State on his trip to Bonn and Paris) has not been identified in Department of State files.

4. Re specific points in Heath's suggested program, Emb believes following observations pertinent to situation:

(*a*) On basis record to date Bao Dai does not appear capable stepping out in front and revitalizing Vietnamese efforts by his own activities. Burden, therefore, must fall on members his govt and newly-formed govt[2] may represent genuine nationalist elements who, it is hoped, will subordinate internal rivalries to larger interests their country and concentrate on real enemy instead of on emotional criticism of and opposition to French. Bao Dai's influence over and open support such elements could be decisive contribution. There is, of course, danger excessively independent action vis-à-vis French in order enable Viet Govt show it is truly independent. While this is in sense unreal in view essential Fr mil and financial responsibilities for keeping IC out of Commie hands Fr might be persuaded to give Viets more flexibility of action in order achieve revitalization needed if they, and we, are to succeed in IC. This would logically require Fr commitment go much further than in past toward evolution position Assoc States in Fr Union, as well as concrete action as evidence their intentions. Some of points suggested by Heath for Fr program would tend achieve this result.

(*b*) Vietnamese already for obvious psychological reasons put too much emphasis on their international position. Paucity first-rate Vietnamese and expense involved argue against their increasing their dipl representation abroad unless clearly in natl interest do so. Aside from US, UK and Vatican, only countries where Vietnamese would actually gain by representation are Asian.

(*c*) Emb believes we should go slow on emphasizing formation popularly elected Assembly. It would have to be clear advantages outweigh disadvantages. Latter include possibility mere trappings democratic forms with none of substance in period when firm hand and minimum bickering needed. While popularly elected Assembly might provide emotional outlet and have psychological benefits, it might degenerate into mere debating forum for irresponsible criticism of both Vietnamese Govt and Fr and end up by paralyzing rather than facilitating action. Similar caution should be exercised in case trade unions in view their possible infiltration by Viet Minh adherents and use as powerful and potentially explosive weapon against govt.

(*d*) Question use US advisers is most delicate. Department will recall Article IV of March 8 accords (Auriol–Bao Dai exchange letters) which gives priority Fr Union nationals as advisers, technicians and experts. This point would have to be approached very gingerly as Fr likely view introduction US advisers as wedge US economic penetration and as this might revive apparently dormant Fr fears US intention supplant Fr in IC.

In conclusion, it should be remembered Fr have, in official public statements and press comment, given impression France bears IC burden alone although IC conflict is one of common interest to western world. If we are to ensure continued Fr effort IC and at same time suggest to Fr Govt program which could be construed at Paris, particularly in Natl Assembly and Fr press, as a form of "US intervention" in a scene where France bears burden almost alone, we must be prepared for Fr expectation that we are as ready to give assistance as we are to offer advice.

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[2] On June 2, Chief of State Bao Dai dismissed the government of Tran Van Huu and designated Nguyen Van Tam, Minister of the Interior, as the new Premier. For information on the new government, see telegram 823 from Hanoi, June 10, p. 177, and telegram 2532 from Saigon, June 15, p. 188.

From conversations with FonOff and Min Assoc States officials, we have received impression favorable Fr reaction to tripartite talks with particular emphasis on 2 points: Possibilities increased aid for nat armies and prospect further polit-milit talks, accompanied by re-examination conclusions *ad hoc* committee by which Fr set great store.

DUNN

751G.5/6–352: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (Gullion) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, June 3, 1952—11 p. m.

Unnumbered. Pass for action to OSD; info to CCFS (attn G–2), CNO, CGUSAF, Chief MAAG France, CINCPAC Pearl Harbor. Mr. John Allison (Asst Secy State) for Min Heath.[1] From Chief MAAG Saigon IC. Cite MG–3618 A. CSA attn G–2. Chief MAAG sends signed Brink.

1. The issue of mil opns in IC is still in doubt but conditions have improved in the past yr as US mil aid has arrived in time and in sufficient quantities to prevent the Viet Minh from moving into power. Moreover US mil aid has placed the Franco VN forces in a pos which assures the safety of the principal cities and critical areas of IC from Viet Minh seizure.

2. The Franco–VN forces are now in possession of both power and mobility as a result of receiving US tanks, arty trks, air and naval craft, and radio equip brought into IC during the past year. It appears that no Viet Minh unit, up to even div strength, particularly within the Tonkin Delta, can withstand the concerted attack of such equivalent Franco–Vietnamese forces with the equip now avail, without being destroyed.

3. The prob now is create troop strength which must be provided by the further development of the size of the Assoc States armies. It is a slow process but it is being done. To achieve internal peace it is estimated that the Fr and Assoc States forces must be increased to the troops strength which served as the basis for the FY '53 program, i.e. France 221, 505, Vietnam 155, 829, Laos 14,443, and Cambodia 13,412. A strictly mil solution to the whole IC prob does not appear

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[1] On June 2, Minister Heath departed from Saigon for consultation in Washington, arriving June 10. He visited Paris en route.

possible. The probs are combined mil, polit and social. The govts of all three states are young, comparatively weak and lack experienced administrators in all echelons. Complete polit autonomy is yet to be achieved and all three states are in part dependent upon France financially. Polit unity has not been achieved in Vietnam. These in turn seriously affect the development of Assoc States armies.

4. The rainy season is just beginning in Tonkin, Cochin China and most of Cambodia. The characteristics of weather and terrain will be unfavorable for extensive mil opns there for approx five months. Overland movement of troops and mil equip will be difficult during the wet season and wheeled vehicles will be gen confined to improved roads. This period is usually one of reduced mil activity and has been generally a period limited to small scale actions. The full support of the combat and transport air forces cannot be employed during this period and the use of naval craft for transport and fire support becomes more valuable. The Fr now will be better able to operate in the wet weather compared with last year because of increased numbers of US water craft. However, increased use of naval mines by Viet Minh forces cld materially reduce this advantage in naval craft. Ground troops are for the most part canalized on roads and dikes but will be able to operate in conjunction with naval craft during the rainy seasons. Such conditions may be unfavorable to the Viet Minh because guerrilla tactics of infiltration are neutralized and units must concentrate in villages surrounded by water which renders them vulnerable to artillery fire, naval fire and air attack. They can, however, recruit and train in their villages.

5. No large-scale operations by either the Viet Minh or the French Vietnam forces are to be expected during the rainy season either in the Tonkin Delta area or the lowland areas of Cochin China and Cambodia. However, limited operations can and probably will be conducted by both the Fr Union and the Viet Minh forces. The Fr Union forces will be in a superior position as stated above. Because heavy rains will not start in central Annam and plateau area until September, continued enemy action there may be expected.

6. Various clean-up operations by the Fr–Vietnam forces in the Tonkin Delta area since the withdrawal from the Hoa Binh area in Feb 1952 have been reasonably successful in clearing the Delta of Viet Minh large regular forces. Two Viet Minh separate regiments and four battalions from regular divs are now inside the perimeter. Other factors such as weather, troop fatigue and movements to base outside the delta have reduced the number of Viet Minh units within the delta. These clean-up operations have greatly reduced the Viet Minh threat to the vital Hanoi–Haiduong–Haiphong line of communications.

7. The Fr–Vietnam withdrawal from the Hoa Binh area slightly reduced def perimeter, re-established the Fr–Vietnam mobile reserve and placed these forces in position to strike within the delta or meet an attack against the perimeter elsewhere. The Hoa Binh withdrawal however also released the Viet Minh 308th and 312th divs from combat and they have had over three months to recuperate, refit, recruit and train. They are now located northwest of Hanoi and in a position to strike from either the north or west against that city. One or both of these divs cld move eastward to support the 316th div now north of Hanoi in acting as a screen for an attack by the CCF. Both the 308th and 312th divs are now rated as combat ready. No info is available as to their plans of action.

8. Troop strength of the opposing forces in the Tonkin Delta area are approx equal but the Fr and VN are better trained, equipped, fed and have better medical facilities. The Fr control the air. There is no Viet Minh airforce or navy. However in recent months Viet Minh anti-aircraft fire has increased somewhat in the Tonkin Delta area both in quantity and accuracy. This new factor may force the Fr to modify their tactics for both air transport and bombing and strafing. The Fr navy controls the seacoast of IC but is unable to definitely stop all smuggling and troop movement by sampans, junks and other small craft. Some beginning of resistance by peasants to Viet Minh infiltration, conscription and rice collection in the Tonkin Delta area is reported. The morale of the Viet Minh troops however is still high.

9. The present Fr airlift capabilities are still inadequate. By assembling all their transport type aircraft they can achieve a one-flight two battalion lift, providing they cease all other essential transport activity. Additnl air transport for a one-flight lift of a combat team, the equivalent of four small battalions seems essential to achieve surprise as to time, place and strength for the destruction of weaker Viet Minh units. The presently programmed C–47's and proposed movement of JU–52 aircraft from France will finally provide the additional planes needed.

10. The aircraft carrier *Arromanches* and its escort the destroyer *Malin* have returned to France for overhaul during the rainy season bringing a reduction in air strength and mobility. Absence of the aircraft carrier will materially reduce naval effectiveness particularly in off shore surveillance and combat air action. The date for return of these vessels is not known.

11. The development of the Assoc States armies is progressing but not at the rate originally scheduled. Progress has been delayed by lack of funds and training cadres for these armies. Originally the Vietnamese planned to org four additional divs during 1952 but later reduced this schedule to two for budgetary reasons.

12. Vietnam now has infantry battalions sufficient for four divs and has five additional battalions assigned to the fifth and sixth divs which are now being formed. Equip for these latter two divs is included in the FY '52 program and delivery is expected before the end of 1952.

13. Native units are being used as both static troops and as part of mobile striking forces. Their use as static troops releases Fr forces for mobile opns. The VN bns in the Tonkin Delta area have proven to be competent combat units, particularly when working with Fr units. An increasing number of platoons, companies and bns are being officered by VN. Lack of trained senior officers with senior command and gen staff training and experience continues to be the major bar to the development of independent Assoc States armies. No service school has yet been estab to provide such training.

14. Consideration of info avail from all sources here in IC at this time leads to the fol conclusions:

a. Fr Union forces can continue to hold the areas they now occupy in IC during the next six months and can conduct ltd local opns. Barring CCF intervention this shld be a period of relative inactivity, particularly in the all-important Tonkin Delta area.

b. By the end of the rainy season (Oct), if US and Chi aid to the combatants continue at the present rate, the Fr Union forces will have a relatively slight advantage and can possibly launch a moderately large opn.

c. If the Chi materially increase their aid to the VM during the rainy season with no increase of VM strength, to include a minimum of anti-tank weapons, anti-acft arty and mines the Fr Union forces shld still be able to hold their present occupied areas.

d. Contd Chi aid to the VM under either "*b*" or "*c*" above for one year wld not seriously affect the relative capabilities of the combatants. Increasing MDAP deliveries and increased development of the Assoc States armies wld more than off-set such CCF aid. For decisive action the CCF wld be forced to bring in several divs and attack in mass. At present in face of a Franco–VN attack the VM forces avoid combat by breaking up into small groups and dispersing rapidly, disappearing in the night and later reorganizing at a predesignated place. As long as they continue this method they will be difficult destroy.

e. The addition of a VM airforce comparable to that now used by the Fr Union forces wld not be decisive. Such resistance wld, however, materially reduce the freedom of air movement now enjoyed by the Fr Union forces but a VM airforce similar in size and composition cld not attain air superiority. Loss of freedom of the air wld force the Fr Union forces to materially change their combat and supply tactics. To date wide use has been made of Fr air for movement of mobile striking forces and for resupply. Tactical support and bombing wld be similarly affected since a greater percentage of fighters now used for ground support wld be employed in their primary role as fighters. The Franco–VN forces have developed a high degree of mobility particularly in the Tonkin

Delta area, extensive use of parachutists, movement by fast naval craft and truck units. Introduction of an airforce by the VM wld seriously reduce this mobility. Ground troops might be forced move in more dispersed formations.

f. The addition of a VM airforce of comparable size to the present French force, but incl MIG–15's wld result in loss of air supremacy to the Fr. The Fr forces now possess no air units capable of effectively intercepting jet type acft. If the Viet Minh, aided by the CCF, commit MIG–15's it will undoubtedly be by surprise concentrated attack on the Tonkin Delta installations. The Fr VN forces do not possess adequate air warning system to give quick warning of such an attack. The effect of such a surprise attack might be to neutralize Fr airforce and at least partially destroy army, navy and airforce installations. Over the past year there has been a continual improvement and expansion of army, navy and airforce installations incl large supply and ammunition bases and two additional airfields, in the Tonkin area. The bulk of all US army and a considerable portion of the navy and airforce MDAP equip is located there.

15. The present Fr Union forces in IC have the fol capabilities in case of a CCF intervention in the Tonkin area in conjunction with the present Viet Minh forces.

a. Against a force of not more than three divs supported by air incl MIG–15's they may be able to hold the Haiphong and Hanoi perimeter areas with great difficulty and at the same time hold all other areas now occupied in IC.

b. Against a force of five divs supported by air, incl MIG–15's they wld be unable to hold the Tonkin Delta area. Such an attack, launched with speed and surprise, wld probably result in the isolation of Hanoi, except by air, by cutting the vital Hanoi–Hai Duong–Haiphong line of communications and the capture of both Hanoi and Haiphong. Evacuation of mil personnel wld be virtually impossible and the bulk of mil equip in Tonkin wld be lost.

16. Tonkin is the key to IC and the main def against CCF invasion. With its fall the loss of the bal of IC wld only be a question of time.

GULLION

751G.00/6–752 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, June 7, 1952—6 p. m.

7652. Rptd info Saigon 433. From Heath.[1] I saw Letourneau today and communicated substance of paras 3 and 5 Deptel 7205, June 5.[2]

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[1] Minister Heath was in Paris en route from his post to Washington for consultation.

[2] Telegram 7205 to Paris, June 5, not printed, concerned preparations for the visit of Jean Letourneau, High Commissioner in Indochina and Minister for the Associated States, to Washington, June 16–17. In paragraphs 3 and 5, the Department requested that the French be asked to supply specific information regarding their budget and anticipated expenditures for Indochina. (601.5151G/6–452)

Letourneau said that his assistants were already preparing specific info suggested by Dept and would telegraph it to Fr Emb Wash on Monday, June 9.

Letourneau said there were three subjects he wished to take up in Wash:

1. Whether it was possible for US to increase its mil assistance to the Fr Union Forces and Natl Armies of IC in calendar years 1952 and 1953 and the amount and nature of such assistance. By "nature" he wished to know whether the increased assistance would be applied only tech maintenance and equipment of the Natl Armies or whether it would be divided between Fr Union Forces and Natl Armies. Letourneau said that while it might have been agreed at Lisbon that Fr would ask no further assistance for its CY 1952 mil budget he hoped that nevertheless, some assistance could be given for that period. Fr had been obliged to cancel certain contracts for equipment of metropolitan forces for budgetary reasons and he asserted that it was to the general interest that development of metropolitan forces be accelerated.

2. The revival of the *ad hoc* comite with a meeting scheduled at a very early date, say in Paris, to endeavor to obtain agreement with US and Brit as to the action they would take in case of a Chinese invasion of IC; whether (*a*) they would merely cooperate in evacuating the Fr Expeditionary Force, (*b*) whether they would be prepared to furnish naval, ground or air forces to assist Fr Union Forces in repelling invasion, or (*c*) whether they would be prepared to counter invasion by action against Chinese forces elsewhere.

Closely following this meeting he thought there should be another meeting between mil reps of the three countries to implement plan [for?] the broad decisions resulting from the *ad hoc* meeting. In addition to periodic meetings of mil reps such as twice occurred at Singapore he, Letourneau, was in favor of establishing a permanent secretariat, say at Singapore or Honolulu, to follow and anticipate developments in the IC situation. He suggested that both in periodic meetings of mil reps or in the case of a standing mil study group, reps of Australia and New Zealand might be admitted as participants or observers.

3. He would like to learn in Wash whether the FY 1953 program of Amer aid for IC would be rapidly delivered.

Letourneau suggested the conversations might begin by his giving an exposé of the mil-polit situation and prospects in IC.

He said he would be authorized to discuss other aspects of Fr foreign and mil policy aside from those relating to IC. If it were desired that he give Fr version other questions he would appreciate it if he could be advised of the questions in advance.

He will send Monday[3] a telegram along above lines to Fr Emb, Wash for communication to State Dept.

DUNN

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[3] June 9.

751G.00/6–952: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, June 9, 1952—8 p. m.

7684. Sent Saigon 436, London unnumbered. Deptel 7241, June 7.[1]

1. Following Emb views re para 1 *b* Saigon tel 2224, May 12:

While recognizing desirability some kind of evolutionary statement by French and likely beneficial effect in Indochina, as well as elsewhere in Asia, Emb believes it would be difficult for French Govt to issue statement committing it to specific long range future plans without very careful consideration by French Cabinet and possibly without consultation with, or debate in, National Assembly. Saigon tel 2224 may provide solution this question in stating that French position seems to have moved far enough so that statement could catch up with facts.

Emb suggests desirability proposing to Letourneau issuance of "balance sheet" by French Govt which would show what French have actually done in Indochina in terms of transferring admin control and authority to Vietnamese, including, of course, creation national armies. If such statement of results to date could be accompanied by general statement that with restoration peace position Associated States within French Union could be considered, so much the better.

French in past have failed obtain maximum publicity value out of concessions they have made over period several years and Emb's effort at one time to obtain, for use our diplomatic missions in Asia, from Ministry Associated States actual details of French actions in Indochina representing transfers authority to Vietnamese met with no success.

Time might well be propitious for French Govt to draw all loose ends together and issue what would in effect be white paper on Indochina. Only argument against such action would be possibility of revealing what limitations still remain on independence Associated States. Emb is of opinion, however, that it would do no harm to discuss this subject with Letourneau and some good might result therefrom.

In connection talks with Letourneau, Dept might also wish bring up Franco–Associated States econ conversations now going on at Paris. It will be recalled Emb approached FonOff prior opening these econ conversations pointing out Dept's desire bring to French Govt's attention US trade arrangements with Philippines as pertinent to Franco–Associated States discussions. (Embtel 6582, April 26, Saigon 384.)[2] French have in effect given polite brush off on this subject by failure follow through on Emb's offer to provide more details and to discuss further. Min Associated States says talks have stopped for time being due Vietnamese Governmental changes and that Associated States have not yet submitted lists referred to in Embtel 7155, May 19, Saigon 406.[3]

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[1] In telegram 7241 to Paris, June 7, not printed, the Department asked the Embassy to comment on paragraph I B of telegram 2224 from Saigon, May 12. (601.5151G/6–752) Paragraph I B considered the question of an "evolutionary statement" by the French Government. Telegram 2224 is printed on p. 134.

[2] Not printed.

DUNN

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[3] Not printed.

751G.00/6-1052 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, June 10, 1952—noon.

823. Dept pass Paris, Saigon; rptd info Paris 302, Saigon 525. While Tam govt has not yet been sworn in and one week affords inadequate perspective to judge in detail its reception and prospects of success, imminence Letourneau visit makes it appear desirable transmit best judgment on initial impact in Tonkin.

It has been obvious since my arrival here early April that major pol shift was in store. Persons of widely varying pol views have sought me out repeatedly to complain against unpopular and do-nothing Huu Govt, to express their conviction that change must be made promptly and to voice their hope, even expectation, that genuine govt of natl unity might soon emerge. This hope was high and carried with it the possibility if realized, of reaching down into Tonkinese villages and rice paddies to inspire confidence and lend some courage to peasants subjected daily to blandishments of VM and in many cases visited by unspeakable miseries occasioned by war but unlisted in official communiqués. That is not to say delta peasants are pol conscious or even know names of Saigon and Hanoi politicos, but in govt so tightly centralized what happens at the top immediately affects governor and through his subordinates ultimately comes home to least inhabitant of obscurest district. At this hour the let-down in Tonkin among those persons of all stripes who are pol conscious is impressive and disheartening. Even Fr concerned with pol matters, beginning with ComRep cabinet dir himself, are "nauseated" to use expression of ComRep pol chief, who told me he had never before been so tempted to clear out, even though this turn of events was "logical conclusion to long series of disappointments."

Name of Tam is anathema in Tonkin. Not only is he considered Fr puppet, "cop" and sadist, but also indifferent administrator. His northern cabinet colleagues stem from outer reaches of reaction and include even so equivocal and shady a character as Vu Hong Khanh,[1] whom Fr hold responsible for murder by garrotting of not less than ten

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[1] Minister of Youth and Sports in the Nguyen Van Tam government.

Fr in Hanoi during Chi occupation. (Khanh at the time was leading "band of pirates"; his victim's bodies were later found in pit in center Hanoi.) As this tel is being written, Dai Viets still hold out, with result that Tam's cabinet as composed so far bears local reputation of being made up of persons qualifiable by one or more of fol epithets: pro-Fr, opportunists, non-entities, extreme reactionaries, assassins, hirelings and, finally, men of faded mental powers. Whether Cabinet members named, who incl six Fr citizens, shld indeed be judged so harshly, I am unable say, but that they are so judged is pol fact of prime importance. If Dai Viets continue hold out and Binh shld at last leave post, any doubt now lingering in north will be resolved against Tam and his crew.

It has been reported this pol development is "major victory for VM." Some persons go so far as predict uprisings or, at least, defections from Viet Armed Forces. While such dramatic eventualities not impossible, I believe them unlikely assume serious proportions. What does concern me is that fresh impetus may be given in Red River Delta to recruitment by VM, who have been handed propaganda tool which they may be expected exploit to fullest. Highest VM truth is concept of independence (at best an ambiguous term as currently used in Vietnam), any card Franco-Viets can play against it has been vitiated by being dealt to Tam.

Mil balance is now delicate. There have been indications recently Delta populations collaborating more actively with Franco-Viets. If VM recruitment and provisioning cld be held in check and peasant collaboration with Franco-Viets carefully nurtured through effective and sympathetic admin by local reps of natl govt, it shld be possible get over the hump of this crucial [garble] phase of war. Without active participation of a population convinced its best hope lies on this side, war can never be satisfactorily terminated by purely mil forces now available or in prospect. On basis of info available to me, I do not believe Tam govt can rally popular support, or provide leadership, which alone can supplement to the desired end an inadequate mil estab. On the contrary, I feel Tam's group will alienate not only many who might have been won over but also many now active this side. Reaction of these people need not be dramatic: abstention alone can rob nation of whatever contribution they might have made.

At the very best it is felt here that under Tam Vietnam will mark time and that govt will not survive more than two or three months.

Pessimists believe retrogression may be rapid. All agree, however, that time is not unlimited and that by force of present events not to go forward is to slip backward. It seems clear that nowhere in south does there exist that sense of urgency which pervades the north, affecting persons as far apart in many essentials as Tri and Linares.

A general feeling here is that while little men play politics in Saigon, in this Delta other men are dying and populations are chivvied endlessly by opposing mil forces.

Under the circumstances politicking seems a tasteless, even sinister, luxury.

There are various candidates for the role of villain in this piece, the Fr, Nguyen De, Tam, possibly even Bao Dai himself. That is a detail to concern local historians at later date. What does concern us now is direct effect of event itself on war in Red River Delta. At best, this effect is negative and it may even be actively deleterious. Whereas under another regime it might have been possible rally considerable numbers of people and so deny to VM by pol means what Fr never cld deny them by force of arms alone, best we can hope for from Tam govt is that it not too seriously harm war effort. That, I submit, is a poor return for Fr blood and American money.

Fortunately two and two do not always make four in FE and things are seldom as good or bad as they seem.

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STURM

751G.00/6–1052 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, June 10, 1952—5 p. m.

7701. Rptd info Saigon 439, London unn. Letourneau made fol comments to Achilles during luncheon yesterday:

1. He hopes tripartite pol talks can be held when the Secy returns Eur in late June, either in London or Paris.
2. He suggests some continuing tripartite body, presumably informal, to discuss pol aspects IC.
3. He suggests establishment some form of tripartite mil body on IC, perhaps in Honolulu, Singapore, Saigon or one of three capitals.
4. Since neither Fr nor US "cld send another man" to fight on ground in IC, he wonders whether Australia cld not be persuaded send troops.
5. Sitn has improved materially during past year, both psychologically and militarily. "A year ago Viet were afraid we wld stay; now they are afraid we will go."
6. In reply to comment that much thinking seemed to be in negative terms of holding on in IC rather than of winning war, we [*he*] replied without any elaboration, "best we can hope for is to hold on until general internatl sitn has improved sufficiently for us to negot settlement."

Emb comment: While Letourneau did not elaborate on point in para nbr 6, presumably he had in mind possibility inclusion IC in any overall FE settlement. We believe this question and general question possibility negots Ho Chi-Minh shld be discussed with Letourneau in Wash talks with view obtaining definite exposé Fr attitude re this problem.

DUNN

751G.00/6-1152: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (Gullion) to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, June 11, 1952—8 p. m.

2487. Rptd info Paris 779, Hanoi unn. Re Paris tels 419, June 3[2] and 433, June 7.[3] Constructive reftels much appreciated here. Subj Min Heath's view, we agree in gen with Emb opinion and note that Emb thinks as we do that program of action to "revitalize" Indochina sit is necessary. Since Leg's suggestions forwarded, Letourneau's outline Fr expectations forthcoming talks and surprise installation Tam Govt in Indochina constitute new facts, underlying following comments with reference to numbered paras of Paris tel 419:

Para 1:

We recognize that any program for Indochina must be "viewed against Tunisian and Moroccan backgrounds". Despite general blackout on North African crises in local press, Viets follow situation and think they see that Fr policy in Morocco and Tunis, which juridically have a lesser grade in Fr Union hierarchy than that of Assoc States imperils their own evolution within Fr Union. Tunis and Morocco affect Indochina as much as Indochina affects North Africa; also if troops diverted North Africa from narrow margin left over from NATO commitment, potential replacement program for Indochina may suffer. This last effect might be subject of query to Letourneau in response to invitation in penultimate para Paris tel 433.

Manner and extent of US intervention is of course at heart of proposed approach to Fr. Whatever it has been in North Africa the measure of our intervention here is precisely that Indochina wld have long since been lost without our econ and mil aid, amounting to over billion dollars. Since our recognition Indochina we have been extremely considerate of Fr sensibilities. Altho our recognition of AS as "independent" within Fr Union was based on assumption of continued evolution of AS toward fuller independence in union, we have refrained (at least so far as record of various internatl confs available this Leg shows) from pressing Fr to accelerate this development or state their intentions privately or publicly. We wld not now raise question about their polit or mil policies here if it were not for: (*a*) threat of stalemate; (*b*) collapse of optimistic estimates of victory (e.g. De Lattre's "matter of months"); (*c*) removal from scene of De Lattre, one man capable, if anyone cld, of transforming situation by personal evangelism.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

[2] *Ante*, p. 168.

[3] *Ante*, p. 174.

As much logic as there may be in our pres approach, it wld be unavailing if it shld decide Fr to "cut their losses". Paris Emb can best judge Fr intentions but we submit that consideration of honor, cohesiveness re Fr Union; Fr leadership in European defense; the tradition of services; leverage of econ interests, and difficulties of evacuation also operate to hold them to their commitments.

Para 2:

Leg wholly agrees in Embassy's proposal in this para to link US desiderata with Fr requests. If we make request from Fr for info or action, it shld be made at same time Fr ask us for aid. For reasons outlined above our approach has hitherto in fact tended to be "piecemeal" and local. We now have new opportunity and new levers. Among latter wld be Fr desire that we finance natl armies (see Legtel 852, Oct 16, 1951)[4] or that we give them commitment on defense of Indochina or join in warning to China.

We heartily agree that Viets must be required to do their part. Tam Govt is hardly instrument we wld have chosen to execute our suggested Viet action program but we can work on and thru it while it is still in malleable state. Eventually, however, it may be that only govt with popular mandate cld accomplish kind of reforms needed and indicated in Legtel 2218.[5]

Para 3:

Apparently, however, present Letourneau talks not set up for far-reaching exchange of views on Franco-Viet policies in Indochina. He is not accompanied by many technicians and far as we know here has had no indication of any desire of ours to broaden scope of inquiry. If however talks continue thru new innings as indicated Paris tel 433, desirability further round-table examination policies at working levels cld be broached to Letourneau now.

A Fr request for fin aid for AS armies shld give us leverage on broad range subjects and particular right to more info about mil system, capabilities of combat units; broader flow of intel; closer contact with Viet army, and access to proceedings of Franco-Viet military committee.

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[4] For text, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 534.

[5] Dated May 10, p. 131.

Para 4:

Recent Cabinet coup confirms Bao Dai not ready "step out in front". He used Tam either as shield or decoy. In past two years Bao Dai gained little if any prestige in loyal Indochina altho he has probably picked up some in VM territory. Year ago it is doubtful that Tri wld have refused an imperial summons to form govt. Year ago Tam probably cld have enlisted better group of natls for cabinet. It is not yet clear that Tam Govt is one of "genuine natl elements" prepared take broad view. It undoubtedly will refrain from criticism or "excessive independent action" vis-à-vis Fr.

a. We pleased note Paris agrees that some Fr "commitment going much farther in favor of evolution of AS" now required as well as concrete evidence Fr intentions altho we still do not believe that evolutionary statement cld cite timetable or name a date. We think some declaration now feasible and may be useful for example in swinging Phil recognition.

b. Leg agrees that AS shld not move too fast in expanding dipl rep. Missions to Vatican and Japan appear desirable, latter in order prepare increase of Jap–Indochina trade, counter unreal Viet expectations of reparations and improve Viet knowledge of threat of communism.

c. In our opinion, formation of some kind of natl assy or popular consultation can be put off no longer if Bao Dai experiment is to survive. Formula all the more urgent to take police curse off Fr citizen Tam as he himself realizes. (Even before accession to power he effectively ruled polit life of country by Franco-Viet police apparatus and application of Decree No. 10 of August 6, 1950, effectively checking organizations of meetings, parties, polit clubs or labor unions.) He now considering an elective rather than appointive assy constituted by indirect suffrage thru three or four stages of regional councils. Fr themselves claim to be for some kind of assy altho recent difficulties in Cambodia may incline them to caution

Under present system, each time Bao Dai makes or breaks a govt he antagonizes powerful segment, losing some of his appeal and auth. He can not share responsibility with an assy or parties. Viets increasingly realize that in process of forming govt Fr and if they cared to do so Americans cld exert more influence on Bao Dai than Viets. Moreover once Tam experiment created under present system runs its course, there will be little else to try except Tri or Diem govt. There is hardly any way for new man to make his mark in Franco–Bao Dai regime. Viets cannot make their reputations in popular assy, free press, or army or finance since opportunities highly restricted. In over two years except for mixed Franco-Viet mtgs and some govt councils there has been no gen mtg of any Vietnamese for any purpose other than social or sporting. Result is to drive potential leaders into clandestinity [*sic*] or into paramilitary sects into third force or VM itself. In absence assy little check on corruption and no semblance popular ratification of Viets acts in internatl field. All these things argue for formation assy which Pignon[6] saw as necessary two years ago, altho he indicated it cld not be altogether "pure in its origins". At beginning it wld exercise its auth only in limited field. During De Lattre experiment of brilliant mil govt assy was under discussion but never put thru because conflicting views as form it shld take.

d. Janot has indicated to Williamson[7] Fr willingness to relax preferential stipulation for Fr advisors. Another way out is assign them to STEM and tech assistance programs. Our proposals also contemplate generous use of UN and third country advisors. Fr sensibilities are now less acute than under De Lattre, and need for expert assistance from any source is as great or greater.

We recommend that:

1. Letourneau be advised of our desire to review situation Indochina in line with Legtels 2224 May 12; 2218 May 10; if not at this, then at subsequent mtg.

2. Fr opinion in Indochina and at home be brought to understand magnitude of "US intervention" in their favor.

3. Approach in this and reftels be made condition to any increase in our commitment; i.e., warning to China; or guarantee of frontier; a tripartite declaration on SEA; financing of natl armies or increased material aid.[8]

GULLION

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[6] Léon Pignon, French High Commissioner in Indochina, 1948–1950.

[7] David Williamson, Chief of the Mutual Security Agency Mission at Saigon.

[8] In telegram 2531 from Saigon, June 14, Gullion submitted additional comments and suggestions with respect to positions which might be taken by U.S. representatives during the Washington conversations with Letourneau. The Chargé addressed himself particularly to military matters. (751G.00/6–1452)

751G.00/6–1452

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] June 14, 1952.

Subject: Briefing Paper for the Secretary's Meeting with M. Letourneau, 9:30 a. m., Monday, June 16, 1952.[2]

Minister Letourneau will call on you Monday morning, June 16 at 9:30 a. m. He will be accompanied by Messrs. Bruce, Allison, Lacy and Minister Heath. After his call, which is scheduled for a maximum of one-half hour, he will proceed directly to the first of a series of talks on Indochina to be participated in by Letourneau, members of his staff, officials of the Department and other U.S. Government agencies.[3]

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[1] Drafted by William M. Gibson, Deputy Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.

[2] Additional background and position papers drafted for the conversations with Letourneau are located in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 114.

Background:

Minister Letourneau has come to Washington at the Department's invitation in order to:

(1) Discuss the possibility of obtaining additional U.S. aid to Indochina;
(2) Lay the ground work for the tripartite politico-military conversations in connection with the possible "warning" to the Peiping regime, as proposed by you in Paris;
(3) Engage in a general review of Indochina questions with the appropriate U.S. civilian and military authorities.

French Position:

Letourneau has come prepared to make a strong plea for additional U.S. aid to enable the French to carry out their commitments in Indochina. We may expect his presentation to be forceful and well documented. It will probably include requests for additional dollar aid for the calendar year 1952 as well as calendar year 1953. He has undoubtedly come prepared to suggest a specific manner in which the aid may be provided. The questions of hard goods, soft goods, offshore procurement, troop pay, franc-piastre relationship, etc., are being studied in advance by the experts in Letourneau's party and the Department's officials. Letourneau may or may not be prepared to give guarantees of increased overall military effort if the aid is provided. This would of course be primarily concerned with the development of the National Armies of the Associated States which development is largely predicated on the availability of French training cadres. He may state that unless some definite relief is promised to France she will not be able to maintain her present effort on a scale sufficiently effective to hold the line against the Viet Minh, even as presently constituted, much less in the event of a Chinese Communist invasion. In one or two preliminary conversations with Embassy Paris Letourneau indicated that he would suggest that tripartite political discussions proposed in Paris be held either in London or Paris in late June during your next trip.[4] He will probably also suggest that the military conversations follow immediately thereafter at a place to be designated. (We have been thinking of Washington.)

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[3] No record of Secretary Acheson's brief meeting with Letourneau on the morning of June 16 has been found in Department of State files. For extracts from the summary minutes of the subsequent meetings between Letourneau and officials of the Department of State and other government agencies, June 16 and 17, see pp. 189 and 197.

[4] The Secretary of State left Washington on June 22 and arrived in London on June 23 for talks with the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom and France on a wide range of issues. After leaving London on June 28, he proceeded to Berlin, Vienna, and Rio de Janeiro, arriving back in Washington on July 9. Acheson's conversations at London concerning Indochina are summarized in telegrams Secto 19 and Secto 27, June 27, pp. 210 and 212. For additional documentation on Acheson's trip, see volume v.

Letourneau may suggest that as it is agreed that neither France nor the U.S. can provide additional ground forces for Indochina and the Associated States National Armies will not be prepared for some time to carry the burden without outside aid the possibility of bringing other allied troops, notably Australian or New Zealand, into service in Indochina be investigated.

Letourneau may suggest that the tripartite body which takes part in political talks on Indochina, presumably in London in late June, be reconvoked from time to time to review political aspects of the Indochina scene. Similarly, that a tripartite group be established to review military aspects from time to time. The military group might sit in Honolulu, Singapore, or Saigon.

There is considerable advance information on the French position to be expected in dealing with detailed questions to be covered during the Indochina political conversations with Letourneau in the Department. It is not believed that Letourneau will bring up any of these relatively minor details during the course of his preliminary call on you.

U.S. Position:

The complicated question of aid to France and the Associated States is being actively considered by the Department's own financial specialists, Lincoln Gordon of DMS[5] and other specialists from the Treasury and MSA. A detailed position paper on aid has been prepared by EUR and has been cleared through the Mutual Aid Advisory Committee.[6] It is understood that whatever aid is discussed must be identified with the national armies to the largest extent possible. The French have given us to understand that they agree in this policy. The question of timing will enter in actively. We have reason to think that the French will request some aid for their calendar year 1952 in spite of the Lisbon agreements. The question of coordinating U.S. fiscal year appropriations with French calendar year needs has been taken into account.

Insofar as aid in calendar year 1952 is concerned it should be pointed out that this is a most difficult problem because it represents commitments in this French fiscal year over and above those reached at Lisbon but that the French problem in calendar 1952 will of course receive most careful consideration. The figure of $150 million is being tentatively set as maximum additional assistance figure for Indochina from 1953 funds. The exact relationship of this additional amount to overall aid for France and the make up and size thereof will be determined in connection with the NATO annual review.

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[5] Assistant Director for Policy and Planning, Mutual Security Agency.

[6] Reference is to position paper LET D-1/1, "Aid Aspects of Letourneau Talks," June 14, 1952, not printed. (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 114) For documentation on the operations of the Interdepartmental Mutual Assistance Advisory Committee, see volume I.

Regarding the tripartite politico-military conversations, it is now proposed that you will agree to undertake the political portion of these conversations in London during your forthcoming trip and that the French will be invited to come to London for that purpose. It is also hoped that by the time the political portion of the tripartite conversations will be taking place in London we will be in a position to undertake the military portion of the conversations in Washington shortly thereafter. NSC 124 on Southeast Asia, now in draft before the Steering Committee of the Senior Staff of the NSC, deals specifically with our position on such questions as the U.S. participation in any defensive or retaliatory action to be taken following a Chinese invasion of Southeast Asia, possible action against China proper, naval blockade, etc. If, as is hoped, NSC 124 clears the senior staff in time it might be possible for you in London to agree to hold the military portion of the tripartite conversations in Washington some time during the summer. This would, of course, require clearance of the JCS and Defense.[7]

For purposes of this paper there is no need to burden you with a detailed presentation of our position on the various political questions concerning Indochina to be covered during the Letourneau talks. In general the Department's purpose is to go over outstanding questions point by point with Letourneau and his staff with a view to increasing our mutual understanding of each others views and objectives. It is the Department's purpose to further the U.S. position in all matters as far as we dare without jeopardizing the basic consideration that the French must be encouraged to continue to carry their primary responsibility in Indochina and be dissuaded from arriving at a decision that the Indochina burden is too great for them to continue to carry and the wisest course open to them in view of their other commitments is withdrawal.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that you make the following points with Letourneau:

(1) As you stated in the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Paris the United States regards the French effort in Indochina as part of the struggle of the free world against communism and, therefore, is in the interest of the entire free world rather than in purely the French

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[7] Regarding NSC 124/2, approved on June 25, see editorial note, p. 208. For additional documentation on tripartite military conversations and the deliberations of the National Security Council with regard to the defense of Southeast Asia, see volume XII.

interest. The realization of this fact is shared by the American people as a whole. On the day of M. Letourneau's arrival in New York the "New York Times" stated editorially:

> "The French are holding on in Indochina grimly and bravely . . . It should also be clear now to all Americans that France is holding a front-line sector of great importance to the whole free world as well as to herself . . . M. Letourneau can be assured of a sympathetic hearing in New York and Washington." [8]

The United States is anxious to help as is witnessed by M. Letourneau's presence here. We feel that this can best be done by a full and completely frank exchange of ideas. Let us talk as allies, in full appreciation of our common burden.

(2) *Financial*—Technical aspects of financial aid are already under study of our respective staffs. They will be worked out during the talks. Our purpose is to identify, to the extent possible, whatever additional aid may be given with the national armies. The development of these indigenous forces represents the best possibility of a solution of the Indochina problem.

(3) *Tripartite Conversations*—We are agreed to holding the political portion of the tripartite talks in London the last week in June. Our answer regarding the *military* portion of the talks will be forthcoming in London when we hope to be able to give a definite reply. *No* mention should be made to Letourneau of prior US–UK talks. You should advise Letourneau that the subject of the tripartite conversations and warning to China generally should not be discussed in the meetings to be held in the Department and Pentagon.

(4) *Australian Troops in Indochina*—We are opposed to the suggestion that Australian or other foreign troops, other than French Union troops, be brought into active service in Indochina except after a Chinese aggression and even then preferably under UN auspices.

(5) *Permanent Tripartite Political and Military Committees*—We will actively consider the Minister's suggestion in this matter and be prepared to reply in London.

(6) *Internal Political Questions in the Associated States*—We are under increasing obligation to the U.S. Government and people to account for our relatively large participation in the Indochina struggle in all forms but manpower. The fact that the U.S. financial contribution to the Indochina struggle accounts for more than one-third of the total cost, huge as France's contribution is, coupled with the acknowledged international aspect of the Indochina war permits us to offer suggestions which we hope will be accepted in the friendly cooperative spirit in which they are offered.

We trust furthermore that the discussions of internal political questions in the Associated States with officials of the Department will be mutually profitable. We stand ready to lend our aid not only in the form of goods and financial assistance but in actual services. We will welcome the Minister's suggestions in such matters as how the services of our MAAG and STEM Missions in Saigon may be improved and how we might help in training the national armies.

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[8] The *New York Times*, June 11, 1952. Ellipses in the source text.

751G.00/6–1552 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (Gullion) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, June 15, 1952—6 p. m.

2532. Rptd info Paris 795. Hanoi's 525, June 10 recd June 13.

1. Installation of Tam Govt was disappointment to us as it was to Hanoi but we are perhaps less apprehensive of results. Sit too tightly controlled here for any radical deterioration and Tam may even carry thru some reforms Huu cld not complete. We agree with Hanoi, however, "that not to go forward is to go backward" and that without "active participation of population" which Tam is poorly placed to deliver, a mil solution seems illusory.

2. Altho we knew Bao Dai had Tam in mind, one might have expected that obvious prejudice against elevating police chief wld have discouraged appointment. Bad effect of nomination not lessened by manner in which what Tam himself calls "the coup" was carried out. We agree with Hanoi that presumption still stands against Tam. Our own estimate of it called for Tri Govt of Natl Union nominally headed by Bao Dai. Instead we got bogus coalition headed by one whom many people regard as Fr hatchetman. We counted as a point in Tam's favor his inclusion of seven northerners in his Cabinet, and his efforts to conciliate Tonkin. Now our Consul says that his name is anathema in the north and his rule may actually speed up VM recruitments. Cabinet while ostensibly representative of diff regions and various parties is actually uneasy amalgam, in which some Ministers do not officially rep parties whose labels they bear and are in a sense hostages.

3. In spite of this we find some bright spots in gloom which may fuse and grow: Cabinet may yet be welded into responsive unit (Dai Viets may come in, altho under pressure and for mixed motives); Binh is apparently left in Tonkin with better assurances of free hand and definite budget.

Whether is sincere or not, Tam has program of land reforms and popular consultation which once instituted may escape founder's clutches and grow into something transcending police govt. In executing his program he will not be hampered by opposition from Fr, from Bao Dai and within Cabinet as Huu was, and he can get things done. Tam has convinced a number of influential observers incl Brit Min that he knows how to fight VM.

4. Test will come when Tam meets opposition. It will then be seen whether old tiger has changed his stripes. I am not so sure that he will "last only two or three months" since he now has behind him the army, Fr and Bao Dai. I do not subscribe to theory that Bao Dai

appointed Tam only to get rid of him. This seems to me to be apologetic for Bao Dai or wishful thinking. Nor have I encountered here any Frenchmen who decry his appointment as some have done in Tonkin.

5. It seems to me that Tam's rise was bound to occur in this peculiar polity in which police power paramount; Consul Sturm's strictures and doubts shld really lie against system. Was doubtful from outset if Tri or other outstanding anti-Commie natls wld have accepted Bao Dai's call while Viet position in Fr Union is as defined in 1946 and Franco-Viet relations remain what they are. Nor wld Bao Dai stake his prestige and his job on platform of any particular Cabinet.

6. Under the present Franco-Bao Dai regime it difficult for any new men to acquire reputation before public and Cabinet makers. Nevertheless, we in Saigon do not believe that Fr directly intervened to put Tam in power, altho they have long wanted to drop PM-Huu. The most plausible explanation we have heard is from Giao. He says Fr insisted Tam be retained in govt altho not necessarily as Prime Minister. Nguyen De was Fr spokesman. Tri refused to form Govt not because Tam in it, but because De insisted that key posts of Defense, Security and Interior be shared among Fr candidates Tam and Nghiem Tri.

GULLION

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 114

United States Summary Minutes of a Meeting Between Representatives of the United States and France at the Department of State, June 16, 1952, 10 a. m.[1]

TOP SECRET

LET M-1a

PRESENT

Department of State		*Department of Defense*
Mr. Allison	FE	Mr. Noyes
Minister Heath		Col. Edwards
Messrs. Lacy	PSA	Major Mitchell
Bonsal	PSA	*Department of the Treasury*
Byington	WE[2]	Mr. Wood
Stelle	S/P	

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[1] This record of proceedings was circulated as document LET M-1a, June 20. Verbatim minutes of this meeting are located in files 751G.00/6-1652 and 751G.00/6-2352. The session ran from 10 a. m. to 1: 45 p. m. For additional information on the proceedings, including a summary of portions not covered by the extracts printed here, see telegram 2011 to Saigon, June 20, p. 204.

[2] Homer M. Byington, Jr., Director of the Office of Western European Affairs.

Knight	WE
Gibson	PSA
Price	S/MSA
Hoey	PSA
McBride	WE
Beigel	WE
Van Hollen	S/S–S

Office of the Director for Mutual Security

Gen. Roberts [3]
Mr. Tannenwald [4]
Mr. Paul [5]

Mutual Security Agency

Mr. Lane [6]
Mr. David Gordon [7]

French

Mr. Letourneau
Ambassador Bonnet [8]
Messrs. Daridan, Minister-Counselor, French Embassy Washington
Tezenas du Montcel, General-Director Min. of Associated States
Raymond Offroy, Diplomatic Counselor
Pierre Millet, Counselor, French Embassy Washington
Schweitzer, Financial Attaché, French Embassy Washington
Col. de Brebisson, Chief of Mil. Cab. Min. of Associated States
Col. Mazeau, Dir. of Mil. Affairs, Min. of Associated States
Col. Brohon, Standing Group

[Here follows the first portion of a general exposition by Letourneau on existing political and military conditions in Indochina. His remarks included discussion of the following subjects: recent military developments; the military operation at Hoa Binh; the status of the national armies of the Associated States; political conditions in Vietnam; the dismissal of the Tran Van Huu government; the new government of Nguyen Van Tam; the role of Bao Dai; political conditions in Laos; and political conditions in Cambodia. Letourneau then turned to general French policy.]

General French policy toward Indochina

What is the policy of France toward Indochina? We are certain that under present conditions it is impossible to arrive at a military decision with the Viet Minh since we are afraid that a pending defeat of the Viet Minh forces would bring about the intervention of the Chinese Communists, who would be certain to make every effort to prevent such a defeat. It would be a simple matter if this were only a contest between Ho Chi Minh and Bao Dai. Ho Chi Minh hates the Chinese Communists and knows that as a member of a Soviet satellite, he will have less independence than if he were aligned with the Western Powers. He also realizes that he is a strong man personally and that acting alone he might be able to reach an agreement with Bao Dai. Yet, because Ho Chi Minh is not a free agent, there will be no opportunity to reach a military agreement. He is part of the Russian system, therefore, settlement will not be obtained.

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[3] Brig. Gen. Frank N. Roberts, Military Adviser, Office of the Director for Mutual Security.

[4] Theodore Tannenwald, Jr., Assistant Director and Chief of Staff, Office of the Director for Mutual Security.

[5] Norman Paul, Asian, African, and Latin American Program Officer, Office of the Director for Mutual Security.

[6] Clayton Lane, Director, Far East Program Division, Mutual Security Agency.

[7] David L. Gordon, Director, European Program Division, Mutual Security Agency.

[8] Henri Bonnet, Ambassador of France in the United States.

The French aim is to protect the independence and the freedom of the Associated States, so it is only logical that the three states should shoulder the main burden of the fight. An indication that they are assuming increasing responsibilities is seen in the fact that whereas in 1946, 88 percent of the casualities were French and only 9 percent were native troops, to date in 1952, the French have sustained 17 percent of the casualties as against 52 percent for the native forces (other losses have been sustained by supplementary troops not considered part of either the French or native forces). The West must maintain its resistance to Communism in Indochina but, at the same time, must work to strengthen the three countries. There are two reasons for this. First, having turned over the administration to the native governments, we are unable by ourselves to bring about pacification of the country or to ensure the destruction of Viet Minh. Yet, without strong local administration we cannot guarantee that the enemy forces will not make a comeback. Secondly, when we arrive at the possibility of a peace settlement, we must on that date have strong governments since, as military support is withdrawn, the three countries left alone must be strong enough to prevent anarchy. Therefore, all our efforts, political, economic and military, are directed toward the strengthening of those governments so that when the war is over, it will be possible for them to take complete charge. When this occurs, we do not expect to retain forces in Indochina other than those of the same type which the U.S. has in the Philippines.

Difficulties are experienced in attempting to transfer power to the three governments because of the national jealousies involved. For example, Cambodia and Laos point out that by giving complete control of the trade through the port of Saigon to Vietnam, that country is placed in a position to suffocate the other two. Laos and Cambodia are small countries in terms of population and unless we intend to protect their interests, it is quite likely that they will turn toward Siam and, as a result, our problems will continue. Still, we are making efforts to provide a system which will enable the three governments to live together, and one example of our progress is seen in the national banking system recently established. It seems certain that a tripartite or quadripartite system is the most advantageous we have discovered, but we are certainly willing to adopt new plans if the present ones, upon application, seem ineffective.

As was explained to Mr. Acheson this morning, the crucial problem is French public opinion. Gen. De Lattre had stated that we are not fighting for French interests but for the Free World. Therefore, people at home ask: "Why send only French soldiers to fight in Indochina? If others are unwilling to go, why should we maintain our effort?" We have our major problem in Europe and we cannot maintain strong efforts in both areas. It would be advantageous for the French people to know the degree to which America is assisting us in Indochina. We can explain that we do not want U.S. and U.K. soldiers in Indochina under present conditions because their presence would bring in the so-called volunteers.

The U.S. [*French*] objective in Indochina is to bring forward the three states of Indochina to a point where they can stand alone. However, from a financial point of view, we will face difficulties with French public opinion if it is known that our commitments in Indochina do not permit us to exert ourselves fully in Europe.

Questions posed by Mr. Allison

Mr. Allison stated that he wished to reiterate what Secretary Acheson had said recently in Paris, namely, that the Indochina undertaking was a common enterprise. In the Far East there are three areas where there is shooting trouble at the present time—Korea, Indochina and Malaya, and in each of these places the U.S., the British and the French are playing a part. The U.S. has primary responsibility for the effort in Korea, the British have it in Malaya and you, of course, have it in Indochina. However, it is all recognized as one fight against Communism and the U.S. desires to play its part with you as a partner. U.S. objectives were the same as French in that we were determined to bring forward the three states to the position where they could stand alone. The problem of public opinion in the U.S. was similar to that in France since we have to convince people and our Congress that the effort they are making in both money and matériel will someday come to a successful fruition. Mr. Allison agreed that the Indochina problem cannot be solved by force of arms alone, and that we were also interested in speeding up the process of self-government. The people of the three Associated States must feel that their governments are doing something for them and that these governments are *their* governments. He further agreed that the most useful immediate effort would be that directed toward the buildup of the National Armies, although it was recognized that this policy was somewhat slow, one of the bottlenecks being the lack of training facilities.

Recently the Secretary of Defense of the Philippines visited the U.S. and presented a very inspiring talk about how that country had worked out the guerilla problem and the Communist problem. It would, perhaps, be possible for both France and the U.S. to utilize his suggestions on the conduct of training for guerilla warfare. Stating that Mr. Letourneau in his foregoing discussion had already answered a number of questions which the U.S. had in mind, Mr. Allison went on to specify several points on which the U.S. desired to head the French viewpoint: (1) While the U.S. recognizes the need for quadripartite controls, we feel that the continuance of this problem keeps the fence-sitters on the fence and would, therefore, like to receive from the French their ideas regarding possible modification of the controls and, possibly, eventual decrease in French participation; (2) in this connection, some concern was felt because of the present provision requiring the High Commissioner to approve those Associated States ordinances affecting French commercial concerns; (3) the U.S. was also somewhat disturbed by the Trans-Bassac and Cambodian rice blockades; (4) finally, although we recognize that what the French were doing in Indochina was in the common interest, we questioned whether it was wholly consistent to retain the commercial benefits of French firms in Indochina, especially when the economic situation in that country might be benefited through increasing its trade with other areas in Asia, such as Japan.

Mr. Letourneau's replys

Modification of Existing Agreements—In reply to these questions Mr. Letourneau stated that the only agreement which had been approved by the French Parliament was that of March 8, 1949, relating to Vietnam and the two similar ones relating to Cambodia and Laos. He had been reluctant to ask the French Parliament to approve all the detailed conventions which had been worked out subsequently between France and the three countries because of the practical difficulties involved in submitting such conventions to the Parliament. Through daily negotiations, it had been possible to modify many of the terms of the agreements, particularly since the general agreement of March 8 was written in broad terms which were subject to liberal interpretation. The French place an important consideration on legal texts—

people often state that the French are jurists, and they are, which makes it difficult to discuss such issues with the Parliament.

The agreement of March 8, as it related to external independence provided that the states were entitled to appoint Envoys in only three foreign capitals. But as a practical matter, they are now able to send envoys wherever they wish. This is an example how the agreements have been interpreted. Undoubtedly, a number of difficulties still remain, not with regard to the general agreement itself, but rather with the detailed conventions signed afterwards, but daily effort is being made to modify the points in disagreement.

There is no parliament in Vietnam to ratify the agreement and, therefore, the French Parliament will point out that while it could ratify for France, no one would be able to ratify for the other side. For the present with French public opinion what it is, it will be hard to modify the legal text, and a simpler solution would be to accept a liberal interpretation of the agreements rather than to tamper with their legal basis. Mr. Letourneau emphasized that he had requested Bao Dai to specify those restrictions which prevented him from acting as a free agent and to give him a list of such limitations, but Bao Dai had not done so because there were no restrictions. At the present time, since modification to the March 8 agreement would face difficulty before the French Parliament, it was possible to give much greater satisfaction to the local governments through interpretation.

Approval by High Commissioners of Local Legislation—At the time the agreements were established, it was understood that there would be a separate judicial system with special courts for French and Chinese citizens. France would not permit such separate courts for the Chinese unless she, herself, received similar rights. It was acknowledged for example, that the High Commissioner's involvement in the decisions of a local mayor to create a one-way street was quite ridiculous, but efforts were being made to find a more intelligent solution to such problems. However taxes must be watched since French taxpayers were bearing 70 percent of the tax burden in Vietnam.

Degree of French Authority—France had no authority over the internal affairs of the three governments—none over taxes, public works, police, post office affairs, etc. The only matters in which she had a direct interest were those relating to the military endeavors such as air force matters and the operation of the port of Saigon. Mr. Letourneau said he would be pleased if the Vietnamese would point out the areas of their discontent with continued French authority, and reiterated that there was nothing in the agreements with the three countries which interfered with the independence of those states except the lack of good will of the governments themselves to work together. It was very easy, but quite fallacious, for some to say that if the agreements were modified, the Indochinese would become a great people.

Trans-Bassac and Cambodian Blockades—When Mr. Letourneau was in Saigon two months ago, the Vietnam Government had been directed to cease the rice blockade but had requested that it not be called upon to do this immediately since steps had to be worked out to control the circulation of the rice. This matter was now entirely in the hands of the Vietnam Government.

Preferential French Trade Agreements—Mr. Letourneau pointed out that while it was necessary to protect the interests of French in Indochina at the same time, one had to recognize that there were certain commercial and geographic necessities which could not be avoided. Indochinese trade with Japan was a matter stressed by the U.S. and, while it was true that before the war much trade existed between Japan and Indochina, the immediate problem was that of economic instability. The agreement with Indochina states that the governments are free to negotiate with other countries and the government of France does not have the authority to prevent such trade agreements. Products like coal, phosphate, and salt need to find outlets in Japan, and France would not interfere with the normal interchange between the countries of Asia. However, if certain of the present trade agreements were broken, there would be two results in France: (1) an effect on the financing of the war effort and (2) an adverse psychological effect. When conditions become more stable, it will be possible to arrive at a compromise which will enable France to maintain her present trade relationship but, at the same time, would not make it difficult to provide trade between complementary economic interests in Asia. Vietnam knows that if Japan gains economic control, it will also gain political control and, therefore, that country will exercise prudence in an effort to gain trade but escape control. Indochina is not a game preserve.

Time of next meeting

In view of the future day's schedule of Mr. Letourneau, it was agreed that the group would reconvene one-half hour earlier—at 9:30 a.m.—on Tuesday,[9] in order to take up the additional questions which the U.S. delegation desired to ask Mr. Letourneau. Following this there would be the regular scheduled discussion on aid questions.

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[9] June 17.

751G.00/6–1752: Telegram

The Chargé at Phnom Penh (Corcoran) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PRIORITY PHNOM PENH, June 17, 1952—10 a. m.
[Received 3:01 a. m.]

56. Rptd info Saigon 207. King[1] summoned Thai Chargé and me at noon to explain ouster Huy Kan Thoul govt.[2] Said he acted for following reasons:

(1) Democrats adopted spoils system and refused to make use of talented men in minority parties;
(2) Democrats had failed to take forthright stand against Son Ngoc Thanh, and therefore unable solve insecurity problem;
(3) Democrats had been dictatorial in actions toward minority party leaders last week and King cld not tolerate such action.

Said that dismissal was not work of French and that although he knew people were calling him a traitor he had not sold his sovereignty to French. He asked us to explain to our govts that he felt that the welfare of his country required him to take this action. This did not, he said, mean the end of democracy in Cambodia because the National Assembly had not yet been dissolved and anyway there were many people in the country who had not voted for the Democrats but who were nevertheless entitled to be represented even though they had no representation in Assembly.

He asked the Thai Chargé to assure Marshal Pibul[3] that the King had taken firm charge of situation. He regretted that there was no Cambodian Pibul to do the job for him and that he had to take the post of Premier himself.

He said that he had asked the Democrats to change their policy but they had refused to do so. He therefore acted within his rights in dismissing the Cabinet (the constitution gives no such right to King).

I asked him if he expected cooperation from Democrats in National Assembly. He said those who remained posts wld cooperate and those who did not want to cooperate were free to go.

I pointed out that extraordinary military precautions had been taken including parading of a tank column through center of town and posting of French North African troops with machine guns on street corners including fifteen placed at my residence. I asked King if he feared violence. He said there was danger of demonstrations and he had ordered military measures to intimidate possible student demonstrators.

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[1] His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk.

[2] On June 15, the King dismissed the government of Premier Huy Kanthoul and assumed personally the post of Premier.

[3] Field Marshal Phibun Pibulsonggram, Premier of Thailand.

I asked him if he intended to arrest any Democrats. He said he wld not unless forced to do so.

He said he had asked the National Assembly to give him a mandate for his govt for three years for the restoration of security and said that at end of that time he wld demand complete independence. I asked him if Assembly had granted his demand. He replied that they said they had no authority give such mandate but that since all authority emanated from King anyway he shld take the power himself if he wanted it.

The Thai Chargé remarked that he thought King had displayed much patience in dealing with Democrats during last ten months and that Marshal Pibul wld be pleased to hear that King had taken charge of situation. The King said he hoped the US wld be pleased to know that all American economic and military aid given Cambodia wld be efficiently employed under a firm vigorous administration.

Legation comment: King's excessive protests that French were not involved and extensive deployment French troops indicate French sponsorship or at least complicity with King in ouster of Democrat govt.

Regardless King's motives fact remains that Democratic govt responsible to an elected legislature has been replaced by a govt responsible only to the monarch. King has by-passed democratic constitution with aid of French military force and has probably thereby alienated active public opinion represented by students and civil servants.

CORCORAN

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 114

United States Summary Minutes of a Meeting Between Representatives of the United States and France at the Department of State, June 17, 1952, 9:30 a.m.[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET

LET M-2a

PRESENT

Department of State		*Department of Defense*
Mr. Allison	FE	Gen. Brink
Minister Heath		Mr. Noyes
Messrs. Martin[2]	S/MSA	Col. Edwards
Lacy	PSA	Major Mitchell

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[1] This record of proceedings was circulated as document LET M-2a, June 20. Verbatim minutes are located in file 751G.00/6-2352. The meeting ran from 9:30 to 11:40 a.m. and from 2:45 to 3:55 p.m. For additional information on the proceedings, see telegram 7404 to Paris, June 17, *infra*, and telegram 2014 to Saigon, June 20, p. 204.

[2] Edwin M. Martin, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs.

Bonsal	PSA
Byington	WE
Stelle	S/P
Knight	WE
Gibson	PSA
Hoey	PSA
Price	S/MSA
McBride	WE
Beigel	WE
Getz	PSA
Van Hollen	S/S-S

Department of the Treasury

Mr. Wood

Office of the Director for Mutual Security

Mr. Lincoln Gordon[3]
Mr. Paul
Mr. Dale

Mutual Security Agency

Mr. Lane
Mr. David Gordon

French

Mr. Letourneau
Ambassador Bonnet
Messrs. Daridan, Minister-Counselor, French Embassy Washington
Tezenas du Montcel, General-Director Min. of Associated States
Raymond Offroy, Diplomatic Counselor
Pierre Millet, Counselor, French Embassy Washington
Schweitzer, Financial Attaché, French Embassy Washington
Col. de Brebisson, Chief of Mil. Cab. Min. of Associated States
Col. Mazeau, Dir. of Mil. Affairs, Min. of Associated States
Col. Brohon, Standing Group

Continuation of discussion of politico-military situation in Indochina (For previous discussion see LET M-1)[4]

Modification of Existing Agreements—Mr. Allison opened the meeting by saying that there were still a few political items remaining from the previous day's discussions about which the U.S. desired further clarification. For example, while the U.S. understood the difficulty of modifying the original agreement of March 8, it was not entirely clear whether the other agreements such as, for example, that providing for quadripartite control of the Bank of Issue and the Port of Saigon, could be modified by administrative action since they had not formally been ratified by the French Parliament. Mr. Letourneau affirmed that it was possible to modify these agreements in the course of normal work through re-interpretation and reiterated that the French were prepared to survey all problems needing modification. For this reason, it was unnecessary to have a general conference on these questions.

Public Relations—Mr. Allison said that the U.S. was also concerned about two problems relating to public relations. First, that although the French Government had done a great deal in Indochina of which it could be proud, not only in the military effort but in the effort to bring independence to those countries, it did not seem that these French efforts were sufficiently well known, either in the U.S. or in the countries of Asia and, perhaps, were not well known even to the people of Indochina. If possible, the U.S. would desire to have certain of its experts discuss with the French methods of bringing about a better understanding of the advances that have been made in Indochina.

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[3] Assistant Director for Policy and Planning, Office of the Director for Mutual Security.

[4] For revised minutes LET M-1a, see p. 189.

Secondly, the U.S. is concerned with what seems to be a lack of understanding in France of the share of the Indochina burden borne by the U.S. The U.S. has supplied approximately one-third of the financial support for the effort in Indochina, and we feel that this American contribution could be better publicized in France. Mr. Letourneau agreed that some effort in the direction of better public relations could be made, both in Indochina and in Asia generally to indicate what the French had done for the Indochinese. However, he pointed out that we were dealing with Asiastic problems and so long as white armies remained in Asia, the people there would maintain that independence has not been achieved—Nehru, for example, prefers Asian Communists to white people who are not Communists. No matter how much progress we make in the war, there is no real hope of convincing Asian people that we are working for their independence.

We can also convince the people of France of the U.S. share of the Indochina burden, and this has already been done through the official speeches of Mr. Auriol and Mr. Pleven. Mr. Allison pointed out that since the French had made considerable advances beyond the March 8 Accord, it might be most helpful if the French Government would draw up a balance sheet showing what had been done and in what ways progress had been made. This would be most helpful, particularly when the war is over and the general accords, as well as the entire situation, would be reviewed since such a balance sheet would make clear the progress made during the war. He urged the French to consider the possibility of such a balance sheet because their case was a good one which could be dramatized more effectively and directed at those people who are still skeptical.

Ultimate Solution of the Indochina Question—Mr. Allison said that Mr. Letourneau, in his statement of the previous day, had expressed the view that there was no possibility of a military solution in Indochina until an ultimate Far Eastern settlement is reached sometime in the future. The U.S. was worried about the effect of this feeling on the people who were making the major effort in the area. In general, our own feeling is that perhaps the more that is done, the sooner we can strengthen the position of the Associated States. Mr. Allison also pointed out that Mr. Letourneau had mentioned that if advances were made and if there were indications that the forces in Indochina were winning too rapidly in the military field, the result might be that the Chinese Communists would enter the picture to redress the balance. He asked Mr. Letourneau to expand on this point so that we could know exactly what he had in mind.

Mr. Letourneau replied that he understood that the impression which he had left in the State Department the previous day was regarded as pessimistic, yet he, himself was not at all pessimistic. He had described the situation in those terms because he did not foresee any ultimate military solution since the problem itself was not purely a military one—that is it was not simply a question of two-to-five Viet Minh divisions against two-to-five Vietnamese and French divisions; rather it was a type of guerilla warfare which was both political and unmilitary in the regular sense of the term. When General De Lattre mentioned last year that he hoped that the war would be over in eighteen months or perhaps two years, he was sincerely hoping that, with the help of the Vietnamese Government and by the use of his expeditionary forces, he would be able to clear most of the main part of the Vietnamese territory of enemy forces and compel the Viet Minh elements to retire to high mountainous areas where there was little population. Then it would be possible to contain the Viet Minh forces in such an unfavorable area and await the time when there could be a larger solution to world problems through an agreement between the Free World and Communist areas—not only in Indochina—but elsewhere.

It would be useless to have French boys killed if there were no adequate administration ready to take charge of the provinces liberated from the Viet Minh. France has not and never will have sufficient troops to occupy the entire territory and, even if this were possible, these are independent countries. It would be a curious matter to grant them their independence and then occupy them completely. This is not a military problem alone but is actually half political and half military and, although we have made great progress in the past two years, thanks in a large part to U.S. aid, the Vietnamese soldiers themselves are the only ones who are able to pacify their country. Their progress to date has not been entirely satisfactory, but they are making a real effort and we are attempting to help them to increase their progress. That is what was meant by my statement yesterday and that is why it should be regarded as optimistic.

Mr. Allison said that he understood from Mr. Letourneau's comments of the previous day that there was no possibility of negotiation with Ho Chi Minh at the present time since Ho Chi Minh was not in a position to negotiate. Therefore, we assume that when Mr. Letourneau talked of negotiation, he was referring to an overall settlement rather than to a settlement limited to Indochina alone. Mr. Letourneau said that during a press conference in Saigon, he had been asked whether he would be willing to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh. He had answered that he would not negotiate unless Ho Chi Minh proposed some offer, in which case he would consult with the three governments and with the Free World to decide future courses of action. However, there is no possibility of the French engaging in such negotiation at the present time because in Asia nothing is secret and, if such negotiations were to be undertaken, the Vietnamese would lose all confidence in the French since they would be certain that the French planned to leave them to the mercy of Ho Chi Minh.

Rumors might exist outside Indochina regarding possible negotiations, but the French position remains the same as that stated by Mr. Pleven last year and which, it was understood, he had restated to President Truman during his visit to Washington. Mr. Pleven has told the Parliament that if there is a truce in Korea, we might hope that there would then be occasion for a general settlement in East Asia obtained through a general conference on East Asia problems, of which the Indochina question would be a part. Thus, to repeat, the only position which has been officially expressed by Mr. Pleven is that a settlement of the Indochina question might take place only through an international conference on East Asian problems after a truce in Korea. Furthermore, we are engaged in the same fight in Indochina, and you are giving us aid of such magnitude that it is absolutely impossible to think for one moment that such negotiations would be entered into without giving you advance notice.

Mr. Bonsal stated that he was not completely clear, from the conversations of the previous day, about the exact meaning of Mr. Letourneau's statement that if our side were unduly successful in fighting the Vietnamese, the result might be to cause an overt Communist aggression. Mr. Letourneau answered that he thought that the aim of the Soviets was to oblige the French to maintain a part of their forces away from Europe, and he thought it probable that, if a large part of the Viet Minh forces were destroyed, the Chinese would endeavor to reinforce them in order to force the French to continue their effort in that area. The primary task was to force the Viet Minh into the least advantageous areas, but in order to do so it was necessary to create a Vietnamese administration strong enough to control the territories taken from the Viet Minh. Although we have information that there are several Catholic zones now under control of the Viet Minh which it would be easy to occupy, we are not in a position to do so at the present time because there is no Vietnam administration which would be ready to pacify the country once the Viet Minh forces had been destroyed. That is why it is important to build up the National Armies so that if there is not a Chinese invasion it would be possible to force the Viet Minh elements to live harmlessly outside the rich provinces. Mr. Letourneau, in response to another question from Mr. Bonsal, said that he did not think that an energetic prosecution of the war on our side would materially increase or decrease the danger of Chinese aggression.

Military Schools for Native Officers—Mr. Knight said that in describing the efforts to train Vietnamese commissioned and non-commissioned officers, Mr. Letourneau had indicated that we could not expect to see eight divisions ready until about the early part of 1955. He asked what plans the French Government had for accelerating the training of these officers, either by revising the training procedure, shortening the time of training or, perhaps, opening new schools. Mr. Letourneau replied that the primary problem was the lack of available officer candidates for training. Under present plans it was anticipated that 500 officers a year would be trained in order to meet the eight-division requirement by July 1954. Although only 400 per year were being trained at the present time, plans were to increase this number to 500, and even though a deficit would remain, the plan had been carefully worked out to take into account the number of students graduating from primary and secondary schools each year.

[Here follows a detailed discussion of the question of financial aid in support of the French effort in Indochina. Minister Letourneau inquired regarding the total amount of the supplementary assistance which the United States would be able to grant, the conditions under which such aid could be extended, and as to which part of the aid would apply to the 1952 budget and which to the 1953 budget.

[Lincoln Gordon, Assistant Director for Policy and Planning, Office of the Director for Mutual Security, described the elements of uncertainty affecting the availability of U.S. assistance, discussing requirements, resources, and legislative considerations. The amount, nature, and timing of the aid which the United States would be willing to extend, as indicated by Gordon, is summarized in telegram 7404 to Paris, June 17, *infra.*]

751.5 MSP/6–1752: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, June 17, 1952—6:45 p. m.

7404. Pass SRE. Cotel. In course Letourneau talks today,[2] US side informed Fr that subject appropriations US wld be prepared provide up to 150 mil dols addl FY 1953 aid in support overall Fr effort in IC, which probably will remain, as stated in Letourneau memo (Embtel 7682 June 9),[3] substantially same next year. It might be considered this addl aid wld in effect add to Fr resources to meet increased overall Fr requirements in Eur in 1953. Relation this addl aid to overall US aid to Fr in FY 1953 and total Fr defense effort in calendar 1953 will be determined in course NATO annual review.

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[1] Drafted by Edgar J. Beigel of the Office of Western European Affairs. Repeated for information to London as telegram 6682 and to Saigon as telegram 1984.

[2] For an extract from the summary minutes, see *supra*.

Fr informed that in view Lisbon understanding, no addl aid available for Fr calendar 1952 budget for IC, but that we are considering Pleven request for addl OSP in 1952.[4]

Copies US position paper[5] and minutes being pouched marked Sprouse. Text communiqué fols in separate tel.[6]

ACHESON

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[3] Telegram 7682 from Paris, June 9, not printed, contained a summary of a memorandum received from Letourneau at Paris on the same day, which provided information on total French expenditures for Indochina in 1952. (601.5151G/6-952)

[4] For documentation on overall U.S. assistance to France, see volume VI.

[5] Reference is to document LET D-1/1, "Aid Aspects of Letourneau Talks," June 14, not printed. (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 114)

[6] Regarding the communiqué of June 18, see editorial note, *infra*.

Editorial Note

The conversations in Washington between Jean Letourneau, French Minister for the Associated States and High Commissioner in Indochina, and United States officials concluded on June 18. From 11:15 a. m. to 12:15 p. m., Letourneau, Under Secretary of State Bruce, and Assistant Secretary Allison met with Tran Van Kha, Vietnamese Ambassador-designate to the United States, and Nong Kimny, Cambodian Ambassador-designate, to brief them on the United States-French conversations of June 16–17. The verbatim record of this meeting is in file 751G.00/6-2352.

The communiqué of the talks, which was issued on June 18, stressed that the United States and France considered the conflict in Indochina to be part of worldwide resistance to Communist aggression. The United States was described as intending to increase its assistance to the French Union effort. The conversations were characterized as having "reaffirmed the common determination of the participants to prosecute the defense of Indochina and their confidence in a free, peaceful and prosperous future for Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam." For the full text, see *American Foreign Policy, 1950–1955: Basic Documents* (Department of State Publication 6446) (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1957), volume II, pages 2367–2368, or Department of State *Bulletin*, June 30, 1952, page 1010.

Secretary Acheson also commented on the Letourneau talks at his news conference of June 18. His remarks were circulated as Department of State Press Release No. 473, June 18. For text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, June 30, 1952, pages 1009–1010, or *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 8, pages 518–519.

751G.00/6–2052 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Legation at Saigon [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, June 20, 1952—9 : 13 p. m.

2014. For Chief of Mission. Further to Deptel 7404, June 17, re Letourneau talks, fol is summary of subjs covered other than that of additional aid outlined in reftel:

(1) Mil Operations. Let stated two VM divs have been put out of action since Feb fol Hoa Binh withdrawal which was voluntary operation carried out for strategic purposes rather than enforced evacuation. Deliveries under US mil aid program satisfactory in the main since de Lattre conversations last Sep. Details being worked out with Pentagon. Outlook favorable.

(2) Natl Armies. Development of natl armies proceeding favorably if more slowly than originally hoped. To date there are 52 battalions of which 40 are Vietnamese, 6 Cambodian and 6 Laos. Of 52, 21 have practically no Fr officers; limited numbers in others being steadily reduced. Under present training program mil schools are turning out 400 regular and approx 400 reserve (candidate) officers each year. By 1955, when Fr state natl armies development program will have been completed, 1400 regular native officers and 1600 reserves, or total of 3,000 will have been graduated from officer schools. There are now 1549 officers. Total goal for 1955 is 5,000. Thus gap of 400 odd still remaining. Re NCOs, present schools are training 1450 NCOs per annum. At present time there are 5600. As 20,000 are needed by 1955 deficit still exists in present planning. Let stated problem of developing natl armies rests in inability recruit suitable officer candidates rather than in financial or training difficulties as heretofore. He stated present officer training program is maximum which can be carried out under present scale graduation secondary schools in AS. He reported problem in recruiting specialists for armies such as doctors and dentists.

(3) Polit. Let reported that school for training Viet civil servants, to which he attaches great importance in light lack of admin personnel, will be opened in Oct 1952. Claims progress has been eminently satis considering only three years of independence.

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[1] Drafted by William M. Gibson of PSA. Transmitted by air to Paris and London for information.

(4) New Vietnamese Govt. Let spoke of strength and weakness of Huu govt in terms similar to that reported by Saigon. He felt Huu had made more progress than is usually credited to him. On other hand Tam has great strength and as staunch enemy of Commies cld be expected to further war effort by considerable degree. Let particularly encouraged by Tam's declaration intention to estab a natl budget immed. He spoke sparingly of Natl Assembly and seemed uncertain as to desirability but termed it purely Vietnamese problem. He was sure that Tam wld succeed in broadening base his cabinet in due course. Budgetary difficulties in Vietnam were outlined in detail. Fr believes future under Tam holds prospect for improvement.

(5) Bao Dai. Let emphasized strongly that Bao Dai is only strong man in Vietnam other than Ho Chi Minh. He has confidence of great numbers of people and is only man who can consolidate varying opinions. He stated "nothing can be done in Vietnam without Bao Dai". If the Chief of State has a lesser concept of the responsibilities he holds than we wld desire we must adjust ourselves to this fact and recognize the basic consideration that changes can only be brought about through his authority.

(6) Laos and Cambodia. Polit conditions in Laos were glossed over with only slight comment. Let feels present system of constitutional monarchy is most desirable one; that Laotians are honest, straightforward people who can be counted on even if they must continue to receive help indefinitely. Re recent cabinet crisis in Cambodia, Let stated it had been expected for some time and that on the whole it was a good thing. He thought that one of their serious problems was that king was uninformed about gen conditions in the country and that democratic party was not strong enough to take action against either the VM or the Cambodian dissidents. He thought situation bore watching but was on the whole not alarming.

(7) Fr Policy Toward IC. Let stated that he believed a mil decision in Vietnam was impossible until an overall settlement was reached. He stated that if a defeat of the VM were in view the Chi Commies wld probably pour in enough additional equipment to keep them going. If the war were one simply between Ho and Bao Dai it wld be quite simple to settle, but it is not that and matters are not in Ho's hands. In Let's opinion Ho had little if any authority in important decisions and knows now that he is a Soviet satellite.

Let statements in this re were reviewed at subsequent sessions when it became more clear that he in no sense meant that there shld be any decrease in the mil effort in IC because of fear that it wld only bring about a comparable increase in Chi Commie intervention, but rather that any settlement of the IC war wld depend upon the overall settlement in the Far East.

Let termed the Fr aim as to protect the independence and freedom of the AS by bringing about a larger responsibility for the states themselves in carrying the burden of battle. That this is being accomplished is demonstrated by the fact that Fr casualties in 1946 were 88% of the total, and indigenous 9%. While in 1951 Fr were 17% and indigenous 52%. It was stated that Fr gains achieved cld only be maintained if strong admin were established within the states themselves.

He spoke of Fr's role in multipartite boards as based on necessity of maintaining a balance between Laos and Cambodia on one side and Vietnam on the other and in fact between each of the states and the other two.

Re Fr admin Let assured us that once war was over it wld be possible to examine new basis of Fr Union relationship. (Let stated at Press Club lunch that Fr Union is no prison and AS wld in future be free to leave.[2]) He did not in any sense mean by this that basic accords wld be amended but that increasingly liberal interpretation wld be given them and precise provision of existing agreements such as Pau Accords cld be reexamined and changed at will. He devoted some time to explaining difficulties of dealing with such subjects in Fr and pointed out that Mar 8 agreements were only ones ratified or for that matter submitted to Assembly. Others had not been and cld not be under present circumstances.

In reply to Asst Secy Allison's questions re possible modifications he made it clear that Fr wld adhere to ltr of the law for the present but wld not close door to possible future adjustments. In ans to further US questions he explained at some length present jurisdiction of Fr over internal affairs of the three states. With re to preferential commercial status for Fr and three states he stated that Fr interests wld of course be maintained but there was no intention to preclude states carrying on trade with outside world. Trade with Jap was particularly desirable. Assoc States cld freely negot trade agreements with countries of choice.

(8) Pub Relations. US pointed out failure to publicize facts of IC operation in Fr and AS as well as outside world. Let readily agreed to this and gave us assurances of attn to this matter including fact that US participation amounting to nearly one-third of total cost wld be publicized. Let spoke of futility of convincing Asians that they

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[2] Reference is to an address delivered by Letourneau before the Overseas Press Club in Washington on June 17.

were independent as long as white man remains and danger of underestimating gravity of econ, social and polit problems they face as sovereign people.

(9) Ultimate Solution to IC Question. Let expanded his original point that overall polit settlement in East Asia was only possible solution to IC question. He was not at all pessimistic and believed that strength we are now demonstrating in IC absolute prerequisite to success of eventual negot overall settlement. He did not claim that VM cld be totally eradicated as a mil or guerrilla force but that best that cld be hoped for was that they wld be driven into hills in relatively unproductive areas while some time later Viet admin wld be strong enough to organize such areas freed by Fr Union and later natl army troops. He reiterated de Lattreisms to the effect that only Vietnamese cld pacify natives.

(10) Negot with Ho Chi Minh. In ans to US question Let stated emphatically that negot with Ho was out of question if only on grounds that it wld jeopardize security of Fr Union troops. His presentation in this respect was strong and Dept gained impression that even if an attempt had been made to contact Ho or his representatives (which we seriously doubt) it had failed and that there was no longer any question so far as Fr are concerned of a bilateral peace negot. Let stated that a settlement for IC cld only be envisaged as a part of gen East Asian settlement including Korea. He added furthermore that no negot of any kind wld be initiated without prior notice to US. Let believes that Soviet objective is to obligate the Fr to maintain part of their forces outside of Europe and that if the VM suffered serious defeat Chi wld reinforce them if only to keep the Fr engaged in FE. This was all the more reason why the natl armies remained our prime objective.

(11) Mil Aid. At his conf with officials of Defense on June 16 Let raised three main points. The first was need for increased transport aircraft to enable additional paratroop operations to be made. He specifically requested C–119 type planes. Defense responded to the effect that they did not recommend that type for use in IC because of the greatly increased demands they wld create for maintenance and flying crews. The question wld be further studied by technicians of both sides. Secondly, Let stated that there was a requirement for jet airplanes in IC, particularly in the event of an invasion. In the absence of an invasion need less urgent, but since time wld not permit them to be sent after an invasion were launched and serve a useful purpose they shld be on hand pending such an eventuality. Defense responded that jet planes were on the FY 53 program. The third point concerned

the supply of spare parts. Let stated that many vehicles and planes were unable to operate due to the lack of a few critical spare parts. Defense responded that almost all of the spares were now being shipped and that the situation shld be eased thereby.

Defense summarized the end-item program deliveries and Let expressed satisfaction with the timing and contents of the expected deliveries. Prior mtgs at the staff level resulted in an exchange of info which left little for discussion by Let at this conf.

Summary of entire conversations being pouched.

ACHESON

Editorial Note

The National Security Council, at its 120th Meeting, June 25, 1952, approved NSC 124/2, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia." President Truman approved the report on the same day. Paragraphs 8–13 of NSC 124/2 dealt with Indochina, specifying that the United States should continue to support the French effort, should continue to attempt to influence the policies of France and the Associated States toward actions consistent with United States objectives, and should (in concert with its allies) employ air and sea power against Communist China in the event that the latter invaded Indochina.

NSC 124/2 had been in preparation since March under the direction of the Senior Staff of the National Security Council and reflected contributions by the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. For the text of NSC 124/2 and documentation on its preparation, see volume XII.

751G.5/6–2652 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (Gullion) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, June 26, 1952—5 p. m.

2610. Rptd info Paris 819, London 50. Eyes only Chiefs of Mission. Eyes only Bruce and Allison. No distribution except as indicated by Dept. Re Legtel 2579, June 23.[1] Yesterday I called on Gautier Acting HICOM ranking French official for confirmation of reports of Chinese troops in Tonkin. Surprisingly he had at that time received no information from military collaborators. This morning he sent to me AF Col, . . . From him I learned the fol:

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[1] In telegram 2579 from Saigon, June 23, not printed, Gullion reported on indications of increased Chinese Communist activity in northern Vietnam. (751G.5/6–2352)

Chinese battalions reported in reference telegram have been in action past five days against French organized Meo counter guerrilla units in region Muong Kuang–Pakha–Sin Ma Kay and south of Hoang So Phi (22 degrees 43 minutes; 104 degrees 41 minutes). Strength indefinite but field estimates range between five and ten battalions believed be regiment troops of which identification of 111 and 113 battalions were given me. Units probably not full strength. Supposed to have crossed into Indochina from area below Ma Sin Chi in Yunnan south of Riviere Claire on nineteenth or twentieth. French claim these troops operating in conjunction with and support of 148th VM (not Chinese as inadvertently reported reference telegram) regiment. French report Chinese and VM suffered three hundred killed and may have withdrawn yesterday across border.

This is first time French have ever officially stated there have been Chinese casualties within Indochina. French report that there are no French cadres or troops involved and that local command forces are led by own leaders, including Chau Quang Lo. However, French supported action with B–26 sorties from delta area.

There are two current hypotheses concerning this Chinese action: One is that this opium-foraging expedition and the other which does not entirely exclude the opium theory is that 148th regiment got into difficulty with the French organized guerrilla groups and called on Chinese for assistance. It may have been that activities of groups interfered with frontier exchanges including opium. Guerrilla groups with which French have been making particular efforts in last year and which are now beginning to show results had destroyed Viet Minh dumps at Pakhar.

Terrain in this region is not propitious for large-scale invasion and there is no indication this Chinese action is part of or preliminary to large-scale intervention although it is much the most important incursion so far and only one to result in sharp action and casualties. It may suggest pattern for future action: If VM units are in trouble particularly behind their delta front, Chinese units will come to their assistance.

I asked my informant what orders Paris had given. He said Paris only now getting reports and no instructions yet received.

In view fact that action . . . , there seems to be some delay in giving information through regular . . . channels, hence my reporting is nonexpert. Am informed, however, that full review of action and estimate its significance will be given to tripartite Mil Attaché conference in Saigon beginning tomorrow.[2]

GULLION

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[2] In telegram 2623 from Saigon, June 28, Gullion relayed information received from French sources indicating that the Chinese troops had withdrawn across the border to China. The French reported that eight prisoners had been taken and that a Chinese colonel (a regimental commander) had been killed. (751G.5/6–2852)

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 111 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State [1]

[Extracts]

SECRET PRIORITY LONDON, June 27, 1952—1 a. m.

Secto 19. Dept pass Pusan. Rptd info Paris 2530, Saigon 45, Pusan 8. At third bilateral conversation with UK held June 26 [2] on Middle East Defense Organization, Indochina and Korea, Eden, Selwyn Lloyd,[3] Strang,[4] Dixon, Makins,[5] Bowker [6] and Hood [7] were present for British and Secretary, Gifford, Jessup, Nash, Perkins, Nitze, Battle, Kirkpatrick and Palmer [8] for US.

. . . .

For Far East discussion Scott [9] joined British group and Ringwalt [10] US group.

B. Indochina—Eden opened conversations by anticipating, in tripartite discussions on same subject on 27th, Schuman may take familiar line little prospect for victory but only stalemate unless general settlement reached. According UK understanding, situation is improving; there is better govt, wide representation and active Viet participation. Eden said he wld talk with Schuman along these lines in order stimulate his morale and attempt get him away from defeatist attitude.

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[1] Secretary Acheson was in London from June 23 to June 28 for talks with the Foreign Ministers of France and the United Kingdom on a wide range of issues.

[2] For the pertinent portion of the U.S. summary minutes of this meeting, see volume XII.

[3] British Minister of State.

[4] Sir William Strang, Permanent Under Secretary of State, British Foreign Office.

[5] Sir Roger Makins, British Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

[6] Sir Robert James Bowker, British Assistant Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

[7] Viscount Samuel Hood, Head of Western Organisation Department, British Foreign Office.

[8] Joseph Palmer, 2d, First Secretary, U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom.

[9] Robert Heatlie Scott, Assistant Under Secretary of State, British Foreign Office.

[10] Arthur R. Ringwalt, First Secretary, U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom.

Secretary said he had been talking with French along lines he and Eden had taken in Paris. Only avenue to success is building of native army and assumption by Vietnam of increasing share of financial and military burden. French have been informed US will increase military assistance to IC by $150 million. US also offered assist French in military training program although French not responsive this offer. It obvious Letourneau much encouraged as result Washington visit. (Jessup read summary Letourneau visit to Washington Deptel 2014, June 18 to Saigon.)

Secretary said French warned success in IC carries certain dangers increasing possibility of large-scale Chinese Commie intervention. This in turn leads to question, "how prevent this from happening?" It wld be advisable issue some sort of warning statement, public, private, specific or otherwise. But essential have general understanding as to action to be taken if warning unheeded. Perhaps US and UK (and preferably France, Australia and New Zealand) can reach tentative agreement on political policy which wld form framework for joint military planning. Major question is: What form cld retaliation take? Action only against approaches to IC wld be ineffective. In fact first problem might be evacuation of French. Air and naval action directed against Chinese Commies in IC likewise ineffective and US has no infantry available for operation within IC. US thinking is along lines blockade of coast and air action designed upset economy of China and lessen will to continue aggression. Action wld cease when aggression ceased and this wld be made clear to all. Care shld be taken avoid action in areas of acute sensitivity to USSR. We cannot exclude fact, however, Chinese Commies have formidable air force and we may have to attack it wherever it is found. Soviets unlikely enter conflict if it understood no intention attempt overthrow by force Peiping regime. If Chinese Commies do invade IC with real power it will be a threat to the vital interests of all of us.

Eden said he saw no real objection to warning and recalled he had already issued public warning (in speech at Columbia University). Whatever is decided it is helpful to have Peiping know matter is being urgently considered.

Secretary repeated need basic political guidance on which military talks cld proceed. Eden said wld need consult Cabinet on basic policy noting naval blockade involving Hong Kong serious question.

Agreed Secretary and Eden wld discuss with Schuman along above lines.

. . . .

ACHESON

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 111 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

[Extract]

SECRET LONDON, June 27, 1952—midnight.

Secto 27. Rptd info Paris 2542, Saigon 46, Pusan 9.

. . . .

(B) *SEA and Indochina.*

Chief results today's tripartite meeting[1] on SEA and Indochina were agreement re necessity formulation political guidance for *ad hoc* comite and early meeting comite to enable it continue work within framework political principles decided upon. Nitze and Nash meeting with UK–Fr reps tomorrow morning to begin work drawing up political guidance paper, work to continue in Paris if, as anticipated, further discussions necessary. The Secretary made clear that these political principles would have to be submitted to respective govts for approval.[2]

At opening of meeting Schuman proposed (1) UK associate itself in tripartite meeting communiqué with principle set forth in Dept communiqué at conclusion Letourneau talks Washington (Fr effort Indochina integral part free world fight against Communist aggression) to show Western solidarity, (2) diplomatic approval *ad hoc* comite conclusions reached in Feb, and (3) creation permanent military organization for all of SEA to study military situation and suggest measures to be taken.

Re Schuman's first point, Eden indicated he was not now in position to associate UK with principle in question and would have to examine matter further. The Secretary said he would be glad to reaffirm US association with principle. Re Schuman's second point, the Secretary said while he was glad have military reps meet he would prefer look at *ad hoc* comite conclusions as whole rather than in part at this time. Eden merely said UK JCS had studied conclusions but did not think they represented agreements. Letourneau later returned to this subject but no decision was reached to carry out some of conclusions on which committee had unanimously agreed, as suggested by Letourneau. Re Schuman's third point, the Secretary said that permanent military organization should grow out of further military talks which would be preferable to creating such body before agreement on military policy.

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[1] This telegram summarized the second meeting at London of Secretary of State Acheson, British Foreign Secretary Eden, and French Foreign Minister Schuman, June 27. For the pertinent portion of the U.S. summary minutes of the meeting, see volume XII.

[2] For documentation on subsequent tripartite conversations on the defense of Southeast Asia, see *ibid.*

Schuman also brought up question of warning to Chi Commies re aggression SEA and discussion centered around two formulas suggested by him: (1) Direct warning to Chi Communists and (2) statement by two, three or more countries (he mentioned Australia) saying none of countries joining in statement would tolerate aggression against countries concerned. The Secretary pointed out that a public statement, such as that suggested under second formula, would carry far-reaching implications and that the matter of warning should be worked out between the three govts. Schuman agreed that question should be examined again but warned that events might "outstrip us".

While no definite date set for meeting *ad hoc* comite, general trend of thinking was that political guidance principles should be drawn up as soon as possible to permit early meeting of comite. Mid-July was suggested by Letourneau and Eden indicated such date might be possible.

ACHESON

790.5/6-2852: Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in India[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, June 28, 1952—4:51 p. m.

2966. ActSecy requested Amb Sen[2] call Jun 27 discuss Letourneau visit. Nehru's comments press conference 21 Jun in which alleged Atlantic Pact widened include protection Colonial areas of Atlantic Powers, specifically with reference IC was also discussed.[3]

ActSecy informed Amb that North Atlantic Treaty clearly defines area within which its provisions may become effective and that Treaty obviously has no application to IC. He also made it clear that Assoc States of IC can in no sense be considered "Colonial Areas."

ActSecy then stated desirable GOI be fully informed re recent conversations Letourneau talks, fol points wld undoubtedly interest GOI:

(a) Having been virtually non-existent in 1950, the Nat Armies of the three States now number approximately 150,000 men. State of Vietnam being by far largest, maintains the greatest proportion. During 1953 they expected be increased to approximately six infantry divisions.

(b) Over half the units of Vietnamese Nat Army officered almost entirely by Vietnamese while others still have sprinkling Fr techs whose presence will not be required for very long period. Equipment for these new forces coming primarily from Amer aid program. In approximately two years it expected Vietnamese Nat Army will have eight divisions of regulars. At present time there are about 74,000 metro Fr and about 50,000 African and Fon Legion troops in forces fighting Communists in IC, while there are 300,000 Indochinese all volunteers.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal and Hoey of PSA and Whitman of SOA. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 2078. Repeated by airgram to London, Paris, Djakarta, Manila, Karachi, and Colombo for information.

[2] Binay Ranjan Sen, Ambassador of India in the United States.

[3] In a memorandum to the Acting Secretary of State, June 27, not printed, Assistant Secretary of State Allison suggested that Ambassador Sen be given an informal briefing on the existing state of affairs in Indochina. (751G.00/6-2752)

(c) In 1948 there were 7,000 Fr civil servants IC. This figure now reduced to 1,400 of whom over half not employed by Fr Govt but are in service Assoc States.

The major results of Letourneau talks were:

(a) Govts of Fr and US reiterated their common understanding that defense Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia against Commie aggression is essential part free world's struggle against internatl Communism. The two govts were in complete agreement that major mil burden this defense, now being borne by Fr and other members of Fr Union, shld be assumed to greatest possible extent by govts of Assoc States. Ambs of Vietnam and Cambodia who participated in conversations affirmed this was eager desire their govts.

(b) Letourneau made it very clear publicly that future pol organization of Assoc States, once present hostilities terminated by cessation fon inspired and fon assisted hostilities, wld be for people of Assoc States themselves to determine. He naturally expressed hope that advantages of membership in Fr Union wld appeal to them but made it clear both in conversations with officials of this govt and in public that this decision was one for people of Assoc States themselves, once present danger eliminated.

(c) Largely as result of the successful outcome of Letourneau conversations, Govt of US decided continue and increase assistance in arms, ammunition and equipment which it contributing to support common struggle against Communist aggression in IC with particular intention that this increased assistance be especially directed to arming and equipping of Nat Armies of Assoc States.

ActSecy then went on to discuss at some length fact of independence of Assoc States govts and emphasized his strong conviction it wld be impossible for Fr attempt restore former Colonial controls, even if that were Fr policy, which it is not. Amer aid and support to Assoc States govts not directed toward maintenance of Colonial area, but to assist people of independent States preserve their freedom in face Commie aggression.

In informal conversation with Dept officers after leaving Mr. Bruce's office Sen remarked he believed status and problems of IC not fully understood in India and he wld welcome further clarification by Dept. Mtg arranged in which Dept wld further explain to Rep India Emb Wash Atlantic Pact with ref Nehru allegations.

In response Ambs question, Dept offs made point that while US aid and support to Nat Armies of Assoc States and Fr Union is directed toward strengthening their ability to protect IC from Commie aggression, that a necessary prerequisite to such US pol was the independence of the States themselves. Had they not achieved their independence, neither US public opinion nor Congressional authority cld have been expected to support the present US course of action. US aid is not being extended assist European powers to maintain or impose Colonial rule.

Sen remarked GOI viewed Chiefs of State in IC as something approaching puppets installed by Fr and capable being removed in same way GOI had displaced several hundred Princes. It was explained to him that Kings Cambodia and Laos as well as Bao Dai (who rules not as Emperor but as Chief State with eventual form of Govt to be determined) were representative ancient dynasties and their stabilizing influence not only desirable but probably necessary during present crises.

During discussion of sizes of Nat Armies in Assoc States and great burden placed upon resources to maintain them, Sen stated India frequently criticized for large proportion natl revenues devoted defense. In his view, even if relations between Pak and GOI were completely solved today, GOI wld continue to require defense forces at least as large as presently maintained in order to protect India's 1500 mile exposed borders.

Foregoing is provided for ur use in conversations with Nehru and MEA. I hope you will take early opportunities convey substance US views to GOI and will look forward to your report of such conversations.

Sen's responses to info given him was reasonable and appreciative. He requested further info re IC be made available to him and GOI.

BRUCE

751H.00/6–3052 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (Gullion) to the Department of State [1]

SECRET SAIGON, June 30, 1952—8 p. m.

2637. Rptd info Paris 830, Phnom Penh unn. June 28 had interviews in [Phnom] Penh with King Norodom, Fr Comm Risterucci [2] and new FonMin Sondeth.[3] City quiet; Algerian troops no longer deployed, but still encamped near center of town. Farewell parade for outgoing General Dio [4] held without incident, attended by Monipong [5] as King's rep. King still personally directing govt with energy insisting to all interviewers he has not surrendered any control to Fr and his action taken only preserve prospects for democracy in Camb. Thanh has attacked solution as Fr-imposed, but has not attacked King personally. School year vacation has begun and students dispersed, hence little trouble from that quarter. Assy not dissolved; still refusing to take issue with King. I. Norodom delivered impassioned defense of his action to me and Corcoran, talking steadily and loudly for three-quarters of an hour, literally without interruption. He still in exalted frame of mind, but Corcoran says his excitement has subsided from pitch during crisis. He has not ventured from grounds since Coup. He launched into defense of decisions which he believes might be questioned by us:

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in three parts.
[2] Jean Risterucci, French Commissioner in Cambodia.
[3] Norodom Sondeth.
[4] French Commissioner in Cambodia, 1951–1952.
[5] Sisawath Monipong, uncle of King Norodom Sihanouk.

A. Assumption of power: He had executed no *coup d'etat*, but merely exercised his prerogatives in order prevent internal disorder. View of aid US to Camb he thought US wld be glad see Camb take firm stand. Amb Jessup said US cld not save from Communism, countries that wld not try to save themselves.[6]

B. Constitution: King had defend constitution which he had given his people. Serious students now saw instrument defective since there no way executive cld anticipate and resolve major policy clashes. What was needed was veto system like that of Amer constitution. His effort in Camb was to guide nation toward democracy as father of people and constitution; he had to slow or speed developments, or turn them right or left. In present state of development of Camb people and institutions his personal intervention was required. This was not first time he had intervened; he cited action proroguing assembly in 1949 (on that occasion, however, action was in concert with Pres of Assy and of Council). Under constitution one party cld too easily establish dictatorship. Election system provided no rep for minority parties (King meant to praise merits of system of proportionate rep. However, year ago during Fr elections, he extolled superiority of Camb over Fr system which allowed Communists to keep wedge in Govt).

Not only was King giver of constitution, but also of elections. He pointed out that people wld not participate in elections unless they were sanctioned by him. In elections resulting in current Assy he had had to tour country to tell people it was all right for them to vote, but people had understood that he wanted them to vote for Democrats.

He knew he might be called dictator abroad; he was no dictator, but first of Camb Democrats. He had not dissolved Assy; that Assy had resolved govern with him.

I told him I believed we understood his devotion to Demo ideals and desire to adapt Demo institutions to his people, and complimented him on his success in "defending" constitution and Assy during last crisis. (*Comment:* King's coup certainly gave wrench to constitution and was able keep Assy only because it abdicated its powers. Yet King sincerely devoted to idea Demo Govt and example all too rare in SEA.)

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[6] Philip C. Jessup, Ambassador at Large, had visited Indochina during a tour of East Asian countries, from December 1949 to March 1950. For documentation on that mission, see *Foreign Relations*, 1950, vol. VI, pp. 1 ff. and 690 ff.

C. The Democrats: King minimized Thanh defection and singled out as reason for his assumption of power the authoritarian, tyrannical action of Demo party. Pointed out that in provinces party committee actually governed. Provincial civil servants and govs, altho Democrats, chafed under party control. Demos had gone astray and Thanh had gone astray especially trusting murderous Issaraks; King as father of people had to show them the way. He pointed with pride to fact he retained two Demo counselors in his cab.

D. Son Ngoc Thanh: King minimized role and force of Thanh: said Thanh was good man and friend. Claimed he supporting and housing Thanh's wife and she had use Govt car. Also Pak Chheoun, Thanh's demo supporter now in Cabinet, had Govt protection and sinecure at present time. I asked whether, so far as King was concerned, Thanh was free to return to fold. "I ask nothing better", answered King. Thanh was not now attacking monarchy of King altho he had criticized King's assumption of power as surrender to Fr. (King's stand on Thanh surprising since mainspring of coup and reason Fr so applauded it was prospect outlawing Thanh categorically; proximate cause for coup was supposed be connivance between Thanh and Demos. King seems be playing down this theory, at least in explanation to Amer dipls. This leaves him with alternative indictment of Demos as incompetent and authoritarian but not antimonarchical. Under this analysis, he obliged interpret Assy's passivity as acceptance his guidance.)

E. Relations with Fr: King had abandoned none of his theses in debate with Fr. He had plan resolved dispute on judiciary, but important thing now is fight insecurity. Debate with Fr cld continue in due course. He had promised achieve real independence for country in three years. He recalls over two years ago he had told me of his policy with respect to Fr and his intention exert steady pressure for Cambodian objectives. He cld tell me frankly, that he still expected to gain concessions from Fr. He thought people understood this.

"After all, I am a Cambodian; I am not a Frenchman. But what can I do?" asked King. "Siam wants Battambang; the Viets flow over into our country and they also have large Camb minority in their country. In Camb our econ life is paralyzed by insecurity. Of course I must rely on Fr. Thanh says to people, 'let us beat the Fr first; and then other problems cld be taken care of' ". King claimed he knew, and people cld be convinced, that this was impossible.

Fr had not forced recent change in Govt. He had kept them informed and doubtless they had liked results.

King was particularly sensitive on subj of use Fr troops. He said he told Fr Govt change imminent and that they had "telephoned" Saigon for reinforcement. (He previously told Corcoran he asked for them.) He stressed fact that under Fr High Command, Cambodians occupied key posts in def of city of Phnom Penh and internal order in Camb. I forebore from asking why, then, Camb troops were not used.

Fr still did not trust Cambodians. De Raymond[7] had promised to turn over to him protection and pacification of Battambang. Fr and Dio had reneged on this promise. He said that with US-equipped Cambodian troops he cld more quickly pacify Battambang than Fr cld. Battambang, like many frontier provinces in other countries, was the seat of particularly fierce nationalism. Population was afraid of Siamese and detested Fr. He hoped perhaps US wld influence Fr to let him try experiment. (I made no reply. He also wanted to participate directly in programming US milit aid.)

II. Risterucci's views: Following talk with King, I asked Risterucci two questions:

(*a*) Did he believe that King's interest wld be sustained and the experiment of personal govt continued, and

(*b*) What wld be effect of the Coup on disaffected elements, incl Democrats?

Risterucci said Fr concerned on first point. King so far seemed to be maintaining his interest. Monipong, Nhiek Tioulong and Chheoun were there to second him. King had shown courage because risking reputation of monarchy.

On second point Risterucci thought majority of people wld continue to follow King. Number of Democrats wld take up attentiste position and some 10 percent or 15 percent might actually go into open opposition, even to joining Maquis.

"How", I asked, "cld King cooperate with Assy in present anomalous position?" Risterucci answered that under Camb constitution King really had ample power to govern by decree if he wished. Assy probably wld be chiefly useful on fiscal matters. Risterucci expressed admiration for qualities King had displayed. Altho Risterucci was prepared to go along with preceding govt a change was clearly necessary. Recited story Fr expedition against Thanh. When company officer arrived in village, Camb auth delayed reception while he notified presence of Fr troops to Thanh group in vicinity. He then recd Fr troops correctly but made no particular secret of warning to Thanh. (Risterucci has been in this country longer than I but I doubt if change of govt will soon prevent this kind of thing.)

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[7] Former French Commissioner in Cambodia; assassinated in October 1951.

Comment: I believe King entirely sincere, anxious for Amer good opinion, but on defensive on points on which conscience seems to hurt him particularly with respect to use of Fr troops.

In Camb as in Vietnam the installation of an authoritarian personal govt will have to be judged by results not only short term but long term.

King certainly influenced in action by Vietnam parallel, altho he has put more at stake than Bao Dai. Altho there will be some tautening of lines of conflict in Camb, I do not believe effect on dissidence of Thanh, Issaraks or VM will be early or great.

GULLION

751G.00/7–652: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath)[1] *to the Department of State*

SECRET SAIGON, July 6, 1952—5 p. m.

43. Rptd info Paris 7, Hanoi unn. I had my first talk with Tam yesterday. He was modestly optimistic regarding the prospects for achievement of his govt. He said that as a young man he had never dreamed that one day he wld head the govt of a reunited independent Vietnam. While two ministers (unspecified) were rather weak, he had in general a good governmental team which wld get results.

1. He was determined to increase the strength of the regular army, the regional militia, and provincial admin. On paper, the natl army was increasing fairly rapidly, but actually the real increase was small, since it was offset by reductions in the number of auxiliary troops and regional militia. To realize his plans of govtl and mil expansion, he must have more money, which he proposed to obtain by ruthless suppression of sinecures or nonessential govt jobs, by determined collection of existing taxes, by imposition of new or increased taxes, and by loans. It was no secret there were many firms and individuals who were dodging the greater part or all of their taxes. His govt must produce an honest public budget, available for inspection by Viets and by France and US, who were so generously assisting Vietnam. His Finance Minister thought he cld produce budget within two months.

2. Tam said he was determined stamp out corruption. One thing the Commies had achieved in areas under their control was suppression of graft. Viet Govt must be no less successful. He had abolished the old institution of high censorship and was replacing it with a corps of six inspectors. In response to my inquiry, he said that perhaps six inspectors were not enough, but he cld not be properly manned.

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[1] On June 25, 1952, the Legations at Saigon and Phnom Penh were raised to Embassy status. Heath was promoted to Ambassador at that time. He continued to be accredited to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and to reside at Saigon.

3. Cabinet had that morning auth constitution of an advisory council of 20 members. This assembly wld be progressively invested with additional powers and increased to total membership of 100. From the start it wld have power of passing on proposed budgetary increases. The initial Assem wld be appointed by Bao Dai and wld consist of reps of the liberal professions, commerce, and agric.

It was not possible at this stage to elect the members, since almost certainly the VM wld be able thereby to infiltrate the body.

It will be noted that his present plan for formation of Assem differs from his original view, reported in Legtel 2419 June 5.[2]

4. Tam expected shortly to establish a rural credit bank to start land reform thru aiding tenants to purchase land parcels from large absentee landlords. Latter wld be glad to sell if assured payment. Govt had set aside 20 million piastres for initial capital of bank and MSA chief Williamson had promised assistance.

5. He remarked that while there had been no weakening of will and morale of VM command, there were signs of deterioration of obedience and morale in VM ranks and populations under VM control. He planned to exploit this deterioration, not merely thru propaganda of govt info service but thru non-Commie nationalist parties which still had connections and organization in many sectors entirely or partly under VM control.

HEATH

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[2] Not printed.

751G.00/7–1152 : Telegram

The Ambassador in India (Bowles) to the Department of State

SECRET NEW DELHI, July 11, 1952—4 p. m.

145. Discussed Sen talk with Asst [*Under*] Secy Bruce and Indochi sit gen with Nehru at some length July 10.

PriMin seemed pleased and relieved report development Indochi armies and gradual liquidation of Fr position. He spoke particularly reduction Fr civil service. He stated it unfortunate new govt did not appear be more democratic and asked if there were no Indochi leaders with popular support.

I stated the monarchies had deep roots and for time being they seemed offer most substantial hope for successful govts. He agreed that it was wholly desirable that Indochi vacuum shld not be allowed develop, and overnight solution cannot be expected. He said Fr had lost great opportunity get out gracefully as Brit had done India. Stated only disagreement he had with US was fact that we had not put earlier pressure Fr to do what they doing now.

I stated pressure we cld bring bear on anyone distinctly limited and that any event there now seemed be real hope for stable sitn provided Chi Commies did not attack. I asked him what chances were for this development. Nehru answered he wld be very surprised if Chi moved troops across boundary. I stated if such attack occurred it wld in all probability touch off much broader and explosive mil action and asked PriMin if he felt Chi clearly understood this. He smiled and said he had no doubt they understood it and indeed he felt this major reason why Chi invasion not taken place and in his opinion wld not take place foreseeable future.

BOWLES

751G.5/7-1752 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, July 17, 1952—7 p. m.

131. Brit Min Graves tells me Letourneau's visit July 11–13 as Malcolm MacDonald's guest during Fr cultural week in Singapore was enjoyed by Letourneau (Letourneau confirmed this to me) and enlightening for Brit.

1. Letourneau told Malcolm MacDonald his trip to States was successful far beyond his expectations and those of Fr Govt both as regards material results achieved and cordial understanding of Fr probs encountered. He had expected difficulties at Pentagon but on contrary found sympathetic appreciation. He was lavish in his praise, Graves said, of Secy, State Dept officials and of this Emb.

2. Graves said Letourneau enlightened—and disquieted—MacDonald and other officials with his statements re Fr milit plans in IC. By end of 1954 Letourneau told them Viet Natl Army wld have strength equivalent to eight divs. This was maximum which cld be formed and supported by Fr and Viet treasuries combined. On other hand Fr Expeditionary Forces wld be sizeably reduced by 1954. Letourneau did not however give figs for proposed reduction. In 1953 maintenance for expanded Viet Army wld cost total of 125 billion francs (roughly $365 million) which Viet Treasury cld furnish 18 billion francs leaving France to advance 107 billion fr (roughly $314 million). In 1954 expense of maintenance of Viet Army might easily exceed 125 billion fr.

3. Brit inquired re future Fr milit operations and asked specifically why Fr did not take over Thanh Hoa. Letourneau replied he was not going to order such operations involving "loss of life of Fr boys" until he was convinced Viet Govt cld hold and administer newly liberated areas. Graves said Letourneau left definite impression in Singapore there wld be no large-scale milit offensive beyond present Franco-Viet

periphery; Letourneau did not have "victory psychology" that De Lattre had. Graves thought Letourneau saw sitn as "holding operation" with hope of wearing down VN. Graves added his personal view that Salan (Fr commander-in-chief) did not have "victory psychology" and wld not oppose Fr DefMin requests for reduction of Fr Expeditionary Forces. Altogether Graves said as result Letourneau's visit Singapore fears that milit position of IC in 1954 will be significantly weaker than at present.

HEATH

751G.00/7–2452 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, July 24, 1952—5 p. m.

74. Dept pass Saigon, Paris, DEPTAR G–2, ONI, AFOIN, info. Rptd info Saigon 56, Paris 42. About 100 Fr PWs were released 20th from VM prison camp near Langson presumably under auspices Red Cross. Fol account comes from Fr soldier who lunched yesterday with 27 repatriates who had been with 3rd paratroop battalion when Langson fell late 1950. VM sent one man with white flag to release point somehow arranged with Fr; this man then followed by his comrades, who had walked whole distance to Fr outpost. Of 100 men who started 80, incl 4 officers, managed cover 45–mile distance to freedom on foot over rough terrain along RC 4 to Phuco near Tienyen; some fell by wayside and were done in by VM guards. One PW considered traitor by others said have been killed by them on journey.

PWs released were presumed converts to Communism. They were segregated from others, given better rations during two-month indoctrination period, made sing Internationale, and in gen subjected to straight Commie-line without any irrelevant ref to VM. Camp fairly clean. Regular prisoners given daily rice and occasion fish, while those appearing cooperate with VM recd added rations in form bits of meat and small quantities of scarce salt. Recalcitrant prisoners either beaten, confined in buffalo cage or simply killed. Work details were mostly to repair roads damaged by air bombing.

PW report VM officers about them definitely first-class; no Chi officers seen, but one German major and a Sikh. Senegalese PWs treated like children: deprived of sweets when they misbehaved. Moroccans proved disappointment to Fr: at first offer special treatment, many turned informers. Legionnaires subjected special propaganda; according info given by VM guards, Eastern Europeans put through intensive indoctrination course if they showed signs of cooperation and shipped back Europe via China and Siberia.

Before release, PWs recd leaflets to distribute to Fr comrades and all sang Internationale on eve of turn-over. At release point VM guards shook hands all around and clapped PWs on back as if to indicate confidence in their conversion to Communism.

PWs said be amazed at finding Hanoi relatively intact, as VM had given them believe town on verge of falling and saved from capture only because Fr were about to evacuate and special VM effort therefore needless. They were told De Lattre had died of wounds recd "at disaster of Hoa Binh". On one occasion Fr planes air-dropped canned goods on camp; PWs consumed food before VM cld intervene, so latter passed word Ho Chi Minh had arranged drop to prove he had no grudge against PWs personally. Two days later tune changed and PWs told if they picked up any more air-dropped food they wld be punished.

Paratrooper PWs still resentful re conditions of capture, claiming that a paratroop battalion dropped on air strip at Langson cld have released all 300 captured there, since strip at time guarded by only platoon VM. They feel that if commanders had had nerve and presence of mind, they cld have recovered without risk all men lost that spot.

Fr Command said be subjecting released PWs to thorough interrogation, but also to intelligent handling. Will be sent France for recuperation period about two months. Most paratroopers involved have enlisted again; most are in shaky physical condition.

STURM

751G.00/7-2652 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, July 26, 1952—3 p. m.

215. Deptel 132, July 18.[1] Divergence in reaction to Tam Govt as reported from Saigon and Hanoi largely reflective of genuine regional differences. This believe well brought out by comments to Sturm of Mayor of Hanoi on return from Saigon trip to effect Mayor much struck by difference in polit atmosphere of north and that of south where some his friends attached Ministries appeared convinced Tam Govt might last "three years if not six" and that in South people generally less preoccupied with politics than in north because of relatively greater number of other subjs to occupy their interest (Hanoi tel 28 July 9 to Dept).[2]

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[1] In telegram 132 to Saigon, July 18, not printed, the Department of State expressed an inability to understand the divergence in points of view with respect to the government of Nguyen Van Tam reflected in reports from Saigon and Hanoi, and requested additional information. (751G.00/7-1852)

[2] Not printed.

Tonkin officials and people are always much more critical and pessimistic about Natl Govt than Saigon particularly when Natl Govt continues to be under southern Vietnamese. I have cautioned Sturm at Hanoi to take account of their regional bias in his reporting and I am sure he will do so. At same time I wish him to continue reporting Tonkin opinion which is valuable to know and which can be properly evaluated here and in Dept.

Tam Govt is not as a whole now decisive, efficient or cohesive and undoubtedly difficulties and troubles lie ahead. I am not yet prepared, however, to believe regime will flounder in early future. For one thing Tam has at present confidence and support of Fr and Bao Dai. As far as personal qualifications for Govt are concerned Tam is I believe superior to Huu. Very much against him is his reputation thruout Vietnam of being entirely pro-Fr. His reputation for severity, however, is an asset as well as liability. His weakness is that he has no party or efficient team of followers and I am not yet sure he will be able to recruit an efficient staff or acquire a following. With all his energy and will he cannot do it alone.

HEATH

751G.5/7–2652: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, July 26, 1952—7 p. m.

219. Rptd info Paris 53, Hanoi unn. DefMin Nghiem Van Tri called upon me today to request US Govt assistance in purchase by Viet Govt of two Beechcraft airplanes (see Embtel 218).[1] I took this opportunity to sound him out on army and mil matters.

Tri stated he had been extremely busy straightening out certain matters in his Ministry. Development of Viet natl army had not progressed in as logical a fashion as cld be wished and there were wrinkles notably in admin and service sectors.

Tri asserted his aim is two-fold; to develop a regular army and a guerrilla force. He laid considerable stress on latter declaring Viet Minh had both and it was imperative that guerrillas be fought with guerrilla methods. Tri wishes to estab guerrilla training schools. To my question whether Fr were not in process training guerrillas he replied Fr efforts being directed toward developing commando type units. Tri's intentions appeared to be to develop units more along native lines. He implied Fr were in accord with his plans but did not give categorical affirmative answer. He indirectly indicated that one of major problems in creating effective Viet armed force is instilling morale comparable to that of Viet Minh.

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[1] Telegram 218 from Saigon, July 26, is not printed.

Re possibility of expediting development Viet Natl Army Tri explained that principle obstacles are lack of funds and equip. So far as 1952 is concerned no expansion was possible. It wld be possible to make a significant increase in 1953 provided US were able to contribute increased equip and Fr or US cld provide finan aid required. In a sense, however, it is already too late for 1953 programming completed and wld be difficult to amend. I pointed out that it was always possible to obtain consideration of a revised prog if policy considerations made this desirable to which he concurred.

Speaking of Viet war effort Tri said that financial burden on Vietnam is very heavy even tho level of living and comfort of troops very low. However Vietnam wld not shirk its responsibilities and it is contemplated that 1953 Viet mil budget wld be approx 58 mil dols or 50 percent of entire budget. This wld represent 18 percent increase over this year's mil budget. Describing his shortage of funds, he said at present he had no money with which to build mil schools and camps or estab facilities for equip repair. One advantage of guerrilla type org was its relative inexpensiveness.

To ques re status VM morale Tri made revealing admission he unable speak authoritatively since Viet natl army has no intell service. He remarked that dependence on Fr mil intell is one of most serious gaps in Viet mil org. He also touched on ques of Vietnam having mil att in Wash but asserted there is no qualified Viet officer who cld presently be spared for this job.

Comment: Tri obviously much taken with his Viet guerrilla proj which he termed still very secret. He is undoubtedly encountering admin and finan difficulties but apparently approaching his job with industry and earnestness of purpose which is encouraging. I observed that it was fortunate that for first time Vietnam had DefMin who was giving his full time to task development natl army.

HEATH

751G.5/7–2752: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET SAIGON, July 27, 1952—1 p. m.

220. Rptd info Paris 54. I have had long talk with General Salan who leaves next week for fortnight in Paris. Principal purpose—and hope—of his Paris trip is to persuade French Air Force to send him, if only temporarily, sufficient transport planes, pilots, maintenance crews so that he can assure air drop and parachute operations in support of offensive operations within limit of French capabilities during next fall and winter.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

At present he can airlift and parachute only about one battalion at a time although he has a total of eleven parachute troop battalions including a Cambodian and a Laotian unit. If he is to engage in any offensive beyond Tonkin delta with any possibility of success he needs enough planes to be able to drop three battalions simultaneously. Ideally he said he should have enough transport for a six battalion drop but he realized under present circumstances he could not obtain planes or crews for operations on such scale.

Not only does he need sufficient planes to transport three parachute battalions but he said he should have them available before end of September or early in October before certain Viet Minh divisions which should be appropriate targets at that time have had time to rebuild their cadres, troop strength and morale.

Salan admitted he was not very optimistic that he would get planes, pilots or crews from French Air Force in required numbers or on time. He would need full backing of Letourneau who he said was not yet entirely persuaded as to prudence of Salan's proposed offensive operation. He hoped, however, to persuade Letourneau.

Salan said if he were unable obtain sufficient transport planes and crews to stage successful operation by parachuting troops to rear of Viet Minh division attacked the Viet Minh would have time to recover strength and morale and undoubtedly would launch attack toward end of year: While Salan says he is certain his troops can repel any Viet Minh offensive they would suffer losses which could be avoided if he were able to undertake offensive operations early this fall. In all other respects save air transport he had sufficient troops and equipment for his proposed fall operations but increased air lift was prerequisite to their being undertaken.

Comment and recommendations:

I believe it imperative that initiative be wrested from VM and I fear that unless Fr Govt supports offensive plans like Salans no effort will be made to do so.

Letourneau has not rejected plan but Fr Cab seems increasingly inclined to mere "holding operation" or harassing defensive in IC.

This seemed evident in Paris talks prior to Wash mtg then at Wash and most recently at Spore where Fr lack of "victory psychology" disquieted Brit (mytel 131 July 7 [*17*]). Moreover Fr expeditionary force in IC is now actually to be reduced by 2 battalions as initial tardy installment on De Lattre's commitment to return troops to Fr 1952 and as concession to Fr polit pressures. Altho this loss is theoretically compensated by multiplication of Viet battalions and by increase in mobility and fire-power brought by US aid it is compounded with shortfall in replacement and rotation sched, and slow pace in build-up of Viet army by direct recruitment (rather than unit transfers from FTEO) which will result, on Fr own showing, of net increase of men under arms of only 7,000 in 1952.

Reasons for Fr caution probably incl fingers burnt at Hoa Binh, war weariness at home, collapse of earlier over optimistic estimates, example of static phrase in Korea war, hope that "something will turn up" in way of gen FE settlement and "theory" that successful offensive will only precipitate Chi Commie descent on IC.

Regardless of these rationalizations fact is that stalemate in IC will foster listlessness in Vietnam Govt and army, allow VM to build its strength and choose its time, soften up SEA for Commie infection, delay day when there can be real return of Fr cadres to def of Eur, continue burden on US and Fr indefinitely, and set stage for ignominious and fateful negotiation with VM.

To avoid sinking into this morass, I strongly recommend that we explore capabilities of Franco-Viet offensive operations with top Fr levels in IC and at Paris.

Our top mil auths (and Gen Trapnell[2] when he arrives here) shld get more detail on Salan's plan of campaign, but I believe it is urgently desirous for him to have additional airlift and maintenance he needs for a 3 battalion lift.

As he described it to me his fall offensive will not in itself be decisive but effect of knocking out one of VM reg divs may be unpredictable. At very least it shld spoil VM offensive plans.

Since any planes borrowed from France and NoAfr affect NATO sitn I believe it wld be desirable for SAC Eur to interview Salan during his current visit.

HEATH

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[2] Brig. Gen. Thomas J. H. Trapnell arrived at Saigon on Aug. 1, replacing Brig. Gen. Francis G. Brink as Chief of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group. General Brink died in Washington on June 24, an apparent suicide.

751G.11/7-3052 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET SAIGON, July 30, 1952—5 p. m.

248. Rptd info Paris 58. From info obtained from Huu, Letourneau and other sources, I am finally able to estimate cost of Bao Dai to Viet budget (as yet unpublished) and to Viet people.

Under the govt of Nguyen Phan Long,[2] Bao Dai recd from govt 4 million piasters monthly or roughly, at par of exchange, $200,000 a month. After Huu became PriMin, he raised Bao Dai's allowance to

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

[2] Premier of Vietnam, January-May 1950.

7 million piasters per month ($350,000). According to Phan Long, Bao Dai also receives from Binh Xuyen organization a "gratification" of from 2–2½ million piasters per month out of profits for gambling in Saigon-Cholon for which Binh Xuyen now hold the concession. Binh Xuyen are also reported to have paid a similar monthly "gratification" to PriMin Huu. Govt of South Viet receives fixed percentage of these gambling profits, govt's share amounting to around 200 million piasters (roughly $10 million) per annum. Binh Xuyen is reported to receive other certain revenues since until fairly recently it controlled and maintained order in Cholon by Fr permission. They were ousted from their overlordship of Cholon in November 1951 by Fr and Viet mil forces working together. Binh Xuyen are still understood, however, to receive some protection money from establishments in Cholon altho their mil and police duties are now limited to guarding the waterways and outskirts of Cholon. For latter service they are paid by Fr and Viet Treasuries.

Bao Dai is, therefore, apparently receiving from govt and Xuyen together from 110–120 million piasters a year (roughly $6 million).

In 1951, Letourneau tells me Bao Dai remitted abroad total of 800 million francs equivalent to 47 million piasters or roughly $2,350,000. An unknown but presumably relatively small portion these transfers went to upkeep of Empress and children who live well but with no imperial pomp in Cannes. On occasion, Bao Dai helps out Prince Buu Loc[3] for extraordinary entertainment or propaganda expenses in Paris but I believe the amount of such assistance is very small. Bao Dai bought an old four-motor Liberator plane a few months ago but probably paid less than $200,000 for it. The bulk of Bao Dai's transfers are understood to have gone to Fr and Swiss banks, to real estate purchases and investments in France and Morocco. I have no info as to size of his bank accounts and investments but Letourneau tells me that Bao Dai, who was practically penniless in Hong Kong before 1949, now has respectable fortune abroad. I assume it now totals several million dollars.

If he transfers abroad something approaching 50 million piasters a year, he still has from his revenues some 60–70 million piasters to spend in Vietnam. His allowance of 7 million piasters from Viet Treas is not given as salary according to Huu but to cover his "social" and charitable program. While he is known to give fin assistance to his friends and members of imperial clan such expenditures according to Huu, are not an important item. Huu claims that in 1951 Viet Govt made contribution from govt funds to enable Queen Mother to live on more "adequate" basis at Hue. There is little staff in old Imperial Palace at Hue which was partially destroyed.

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[3] Representative of Bao Dai in Paris.

There are only a few servants in Hanoi Palace. Bao Dai's residence at Dalat is smaller than thousands of homes in New York area altho it does have extensive stables and an indoor tennis court. At Ban Me Thuot he lives in modest cottage altho he has recently built guest house and office quarters there for imperial cab. These last items may have come out of his own pocket but it is doubted they have cost more than two or three million piasters ($100 to 150 thousand). Bao Dai has one hunting lodge not far from Ban Me Thuot. We have no reports of large charitable donations by Bao Dai. He gave Catholic Bishops in north, once he told me, out of his own pocket some two or three million piasters. On one occasion Giao, then Gov of Central Vietnam showed Counselor Gullion a check for six million piasters, which he had received from Bao Dai presumably for extraordinary expenses in connection with admin in Annam. Tho upkeep of Bao Dai's four planes is undoubtedly expensive but even allowing for charitable and quasi-governmental grants which we do not know about it is difficult for me to see how he is spending locally from 60 to 70 million piasters which are apparently available to him after banking abroad the better part of 50 million piasters. He receives a grant from govt for salaries and expenses of imperial cab and two million piasters month for admin of crown lands in southern plateau.

Letourneau tells me during 1951 he remonstrated with De Lattre over the amounts of monetary transfers Bao Dai was allowed to make. De Lattre replied that after all Bao Dai was chief of state and altho the amounts were excessive he did not think Fr cld object. It now appears that the seven million piasters ($350,000) transfer which Bao Dai requested for his forthcoming trip to France (see Embtel 61, July 8)[4] was not to be from his own funds but was a demand on Tam for an extraordinary travel grant over and above his regular stipend of seven million piasters. Letourneau says he thinks that Tam cut down the amount to six million piasters but neither Tam nor Fr are willing to refuse transfer or travel grant. The only action taken by Fr was to refuse an additional request for transfer of one million piasters made by four members of Bao Dai's entourage who will accompany him to France.

This was turned down flat with the suggestion that they appeal to His Majesty.

His Majesty's 84 million piasters a year from Viet treas approaches five percent of central govt receipts but if we add the "gratification" from the Binh Xuyen as income which might otherwise go into govt treasury it approaches about six percent of natl receipts. Tam is having difficulties in finding 20 million piasters for initial capital of his agrarian reform land bank. Three months of His Majesty's reg allowance from the treas wld finance this project.

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[4] Not printed.

To my inquiry as to what action might be taken to persuade Bao Dai to reduce his expenditures—and transfers abroad—to a level seemly to circumstance that Vietnam was at war, bankrupt and maintained essentially only thru the mil and finan sacrifices of France and US Letourneau cld only suggest that I remonstrate with Nguyen De, chief of imperial cabinet.

This I intend doing and wld welcome the Dept's suggestions or instructions.

Apparently Letourneau fears that if he remonstrates Bao Dai will threaten to abdicate since he now has sufficient fortune to live comfortably abroad. Letourneau said to me in this connection the "Bao Dai solution" was the only one but qualified the statement by adding "for time being" and remarking that if the monarchy fell it wld be Bao Dai's own fault. Disclosure of Bao Dai's stipend and investments abroad wld have a critical effect on prestige of monarchy and regime.

HEATH

751G.5/7–3052 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, July 30, 1952—8 p. m.

649. Rptd info Saigon 22, London unn. Saigon tel 220 July 27 (rptd Paris 54). While we generally agree with thesis in reftel re importance maintaining milit initiative vis-à-vis Viet Minh, recommendations in reftel seem in a sense to revert to portion of Letourneau talks at Washn and consideration of them must be given in light of recent developments here in connection with off-shore procurement problems.

Deptel to Saigon 2014 June 28 [*20*], para (1), reports Letourneau raised question need increased transport planes for additional parachute operations and that decision reached this question wld be further studied by US–Fr technicians. It is Saigon's view that US Govt take steps urge additional airlift and maintenance be made available for Gen Salan, Fr may repeat request made at Washn for increased transport aircraft. Emb is not aware of final outcome this Fr request.

When during recent discussions with top ranking Fr officials here re OSP questions latter were informed that US Govt cld not meet Fr request in this connection and that of $623 mil requested by Fr US Govt cld at present give commitment on only $185 mill in OSP (Mystere aircraft and ammo), Fr officials described serious difficulties Fr Govt wld face as result this decision. In asking for reconsideration US Govt decision, Fr officials referred to IC problem as one which in a sense prevented solution problems here in metropole with implication that perhaps only by cutting losses in IC cld Fr Govt carry out its task here. One of items for OSP was cargo aircraft, three squadrons of which were for IC and two squadrons for liaison and transport missions between metro France and Fr union territories. If we were now to pressure Fr to make available airlift needed by Salan, Fr wld likely point immed to our rejection transport aircraft as included in Pleven May 6 OSP request,[1] although proposed delivery schedules called for initial deliveries last half 1953 continuing through 1955.

In brief, we are of opinion that Fr shld keep US reps IC informed re milit plans in IC, which shld be matter between Salan and Trapnell, who is now in Paris awaiting arrival Salan. We do not believe, however, that we shld, at this juncture and in light Fr reactions to OSP problem, put any pressure on Fr to meet Salan's airlift required needs. It wld seem more logical to look into possibilities of what US Govt might be able to do by way of supplying additional transport aircraft, although Letourneau talks at Washn wld presumably have already given opportunity to explore this fully.[2]

We are forwarding to Saigon by airpouch memo summarizing recent OSP developments.

Gen Trapnell has seen this msg.

DUNN

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[1] For documentation on this request, see volume VI.

[2] In telegram 270 from Saigon, Aug. 1, Ambassador Heath stated the following:

"Paris tel no. 22, July 30 seems to miss the point. Salan is not insisting on permanent assignment additional planes, pilots, crews but would be satisfied to have temporary loan of planes and personnel from Fr metropolitan forces to enable him to engage in more massive air drops from late September through part of November.

"Such a loan or temporary assignment of material and men would not involve US in further discussions of $623 million requested by Fr Govt. Our intervention with Fr authorities would be merely to express hope this temporary loan of material and men could be effected because of Salan's conviction it could be used to weaken enemy and thus shorten war in Tonkin." (751G.5/8–152)

751G.5/7–2752 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, August 1, 1952—6 : 37 p. m.

241. Eyes only Amb. Embtel 220 July 27 arrived at time when Dept giving particular thought to disturbing question of growing evidences of absence Fr offensive attitude in mil field in IC as a result indications given in Wash by Letourneau himself in June and

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[1] Drafted by William M. Gibson, Deputy Director of PSA. Also sent to Paris as telegram 623.

urtel 131 July 17, which was only slightly alleviated by Singapore's 74 July 17.[2]

You will recall our original concern with this subj during Letourneau conversations here when Dept contested thesis that offensive action on part of Franco-Viet forces was unwise on the grounds that it wld only provoke further intervention from Chi on behalf Viet Minh. We found Letourneau's statement that he was not prepared to sacrifice more Fr lives in operations for purpose seizing land from Viet Minh until such time as Viet Govt and Natl army were capable of assuring control after liberation understandable but not excuse for not carrying out offensive operations purpose of which was strike at enemy in areas outside present Fr perimeter even if land were not gained thereby and important result of which would be to develop supremely important feeling of confidence in eventual victory our side.

Dept agrees with Saigon that any furtherance of impression that Fr are disinclined push war against Viet Minh wld have grave psychological effect on Vietnamese populace as a whole, serve to encourage rather than reduce fence-sitting and otherwise benefit the enemy. Impression cld gather momentum at such a rate as to jeopardize effort into which so much manpower and money have been poured and which is key to overall program for defense of SEA.

Departmental officer discussed subj including details ur 220 July 27 with responsible officers in Pentagon today. We found considerable degree of agreement on necessity maintain offensive psychology and present continued evidences of will to win in form, for example, airborne operations in enemy territory. Pentagon appreciates difficulties in administering liberated territory but impressed by Salan theory that Viet Minh now vulnerable and must be hit soon wherever it is to be found. Object is to annihilate enemy not gain land. Pentagon disagrees however with Gen Salan's statements made to you as reported reftel re ability Fr air force airlift sufficient troops for offensive airborne operations (which Pentagon agrees most practical and effective form offensive action). Without detailing differences of opinion (to be done separately) their conviction, which is based largely if not entirely on MAAG reports, is that Fr are not now obtaining maximum potential troop lift with existing aircraft. Trouble lies in lack of pilots, crews, maintenance facilities and airfields. They believe for instance that Salan can now airlift two battalions at a time rather than one. They think it is useless to discuss more equipment until the Fr agree to provide the necessary pilots and maintenance crews. There was some talk of possibility of creating a supply and rehabilitation depot in Phils.

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[2] In telegram 74 from Singapore, July 17, not printed, Consul General Baldwin reported on the visit of Minister Letourneau to Singapore, July 11–13, referring to British sources. Letourneau was reported to have emphasized his satisfaction with his conversations in Washington in June. (601.5151G/7–1752)

Pentagon reported that Trapnell had been delayed in Paris in order make it possible discuss subj with Salan and that they wld anxiously await his first report after arriving in Saigon.

Dept suggests matter be pursued actively with Trapnell who is airborne officer himself and shld have ready understanding situation, to the end that an agreed interpretation of needs can be reached between Fr and MAAG and specific recommendations made to Pentagon.

Pentagon understands fully danger in allowing sit-tight attitude to be cultivated and is anxious contribute whatever they can within realm of possibility. Dept anxious impress upon Fr folly of giving up offensive strategy so brilliantly launched and carried out by de Lattre in favor of a mere holding operation.

Aside from using every opportunity to impress imperative need for continued offensive action upon Fr auths in both Paris and Saigon next step wld appear to be to press for ironing out differences between Gen Salan's and MAAG's analysis of what is needed to deal with problem if Salan's recommendations are accepted in Paris. Paris shld make every effort support Salan's cause and Saigon urge prompt action upon Trapnell after his arrival while continuing impress Letourneau our conviction that offensive must be pursued.

BRUCE

751G.5/8–452 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, August 4, 1952—8 p. m.

290. Deptel 241, Aug 1.

1. We are much reassured at Dept's decision to urge offensive on Fr. Letourneau seems to be wavering toward a favorable decision and our bolstering may be just what he needs to argue case with Fr Cabinet. We reiterate our belief that Fr are unlikely to take such action unless they are pressed. In recent months Fr leaders have made more statements musing on mirage of negots than they have pledging all-out attack. While world and war still mark time at Panmunjon Fr seems frozen in wait-and-see attitude, altho Korean armistice cld unleash new threats against which their passive posture wld have ill prepared them.

2. Unless they are determined to push VM at every chance, policy of Fr lacks any clear goal. It now seems dominated by idea of the "releve" which will see Viet troops substituted for Fr. But Letourneau himself admits full turnover impossible now or in one or two years

without debacle. If native troops are ever to take over from Eurs they must face a disheartened enemy and they must have behind them a confident and popular native govt. While Fr policy works for latter, Fr forces must strike hard blows to achieve the former. If this is not done Fr position is increasingly one of not being able to hang on or to let go, while US and Fr taxpayer foot bill.

3. Fr offensive has actually been in abeyance since before Caobang reverse which spoiled Alessandri's[1] plans. De Lattre infused an offensive spirit but chief achievement was halting disintegration and preparing delta strong point. The Hoabinh "offensive" caught no VM's and failed its objectives although heavy losses were inflicted on enemy. Since then army has nursed its attacking edge by keeping up small scale cleaning operations during rainy season although these chiefly against VM who have infiltrated the stockade.

4. Now however army is massively equipped with US aid, it claims to know VM morale is faltering and it has available VM [*VN*] troops which wld be useful at least for occupation duty. There are some risks in Salan's proposed operations but even if it failed over-all position wld not have been threatened and enemy seems bound to suffer losses.

5. Gen Trapnell has seen reftel. He is immed proceeding to a personal estimate of Fr airlift capabilities and will make reconnaissance visit to Tonkin. I have expressed belief estimate shld be based on peak need for limited operation and not on normal supply and org tables for year round operations. Of course recommendation includes loan of Fr pilots and maintenance facilities from Fr Metropolitan forces. I hope Gen Ridgway[2] will have opportunity to discuss entire Indochina operation with Gen Salan.

HEATH

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[1] Gen. Marcel Alessandri, Commander of French Union Forces in Northern Vietnam in 1950.

[2] Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, since June 1952.

751G.5 MSP/8–552 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, August 5, 1952—5 p. m.

302. Rptd Paris 69, Hanoi unnumbered. During call in which I presented Gen Trapnell, Pres Tam told me the budget has now been submitted to Bao Dai. The budget he said will increase Vietnam's contribution in 1952 to pay and maintenance of national army from 900 million piasters to 1,700 million piasters (roughly from $45 mil-

lion to $85 million). This wld not mean, Tam said, any expansion of Viet natl army. It merely meant that Vietnam wld pay a greater and Fr a smaller share of natl army budget for 1952 which Tam estimated at 400 million piasters ($200 million).

Comment: When we have full budgetary data the matter will have to be explored with Fr here and in Paris. During Letourneau talks we agreed increase our MSA allotments to France in 1953 around $150 million on grounds that Fr mil expenditures wld be greater in calendar year 1953 than in 1952. If in fact the Viet contribution is to be greater, the 1952 and 1953 Fr mil budget for IC may in fact be less than forecast.

It is also to be noted that Tam places 1952 army budget at 4 billion piasters. Other estimates had forecast the natl army budget at from 5 to 6 billion piasters.

2. To my inquiry where he had discovered increased budgetary resources Tam answered that at first Vietnamese financial auths had taken into account only tax and customs revenues and had omitted from consideration their recourse (legal right) to short term advances from new RPC new Institute of Emission.

Comment: Apparently Vietnams increased mil contribution will be largely derived from inflationary borrowing from the Institute of Emission. When budget is published we will go into matter with Min of Fin.

3. Tam said he was already to start on his agrarian reform. He had already found one Fr and one Viet landowner who were willing to sell their holdings to their present tenants. Tam said big landowners were willing to sell now since, due to condition of "half-way security," they were able to collect only portion of their rents. Tam said the state must take advantage this temporary situation of rural insecurity and encourage landlords to sell and tenants to buy. The state wld insist that tenants have first right of purchase. If landlords prices were too high the state cld intervene and threaten to set equitable prices. This would induce landlords to come to terms with purchasers. Tam remarked that great many "highly placed individuals" had warned him that agrarian reform wld be a difficult, delicate and dangerous operation. He said he was confident that he wld succeed in effecting the bread [*break up?*] of large, rice-land holdings through voluntary sale by owners to tenants "before people had realized it had happened."

4. Tam indicated he had hoped to convene the Natl provisional Council before Bao Dai's departure for France on August 10. This had proved impossible. He expected however Bao Dai's prompt approval of the slate of Councillors and Council shld meet very shortly.

HEATH

751G.00/8–552: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, August 5, 1952—6 p. m.

304. Rptd info Paris 70, Hanoi unnumbered. Persistent canard re intentions Fr to negot settlement with VM again current among Vietnamese. This time linked with Bao Dai's forthcoming trip to France. Allegation is Bao Dai removing himself from IC scene to avoid being implicated and also to facilitate negots. Latest rumors thus far more vague and lacking in details than previous ones. Recrudescence this theme indicative continuing susceptibility Vietnamese to suggestions Fr seeking way out of difficulties by deal with VM.

Another story making rounds of Viet circles is that Bao Dai stock has gone up since dismissal of former Pres Tran Van Huu and that imperial position has been substantially buttressed by increased number Bao Dai men in key positions. In Paris Bao Dai will make a play to further enhance his prestige by pressing for addtl concessions from Fr, notably greater Viet voice in mil policy decisions and larger role for Viet higher officers.

We believe above two items nothing more than local gossip. What appears real, however, is that Vietnamese outside govt circles who were momentarily shaken from their usual carping and pessimistic attitude toward Natl Govt by series of bold and unequivocal statements made by Pres Tam and Bao Dai are now becoming restless. Willingness to withhold judgment until govt had chance to prove itself, which very evident several weeks ago, giving way to criticism that "fine declarations" have so far amounted to little concrete. It is asserted:

1. Natl Provisional Council project is developing very slowly and ambiguity which surrounds its composition lends substance to view its members are likely to be hand-picked groups of "safe" men. It is said that some moderate but well thought of leaders who had been approached had refused participate in Council.
2. Much daunted propaganda action program promised by Info Min Giao has never gotten underway. With Giao out of country his deputy reportedly avoiding taking action. Other mins finding that shortage of funds and polit "realities" are proving almost insurmountable obstacles to implementation programs.
3. There is glaring lack of dynamism and know-how among weaker Cab members. Tran Van Que, Secy of State for Studies and Reform, for instance has reportedly not even organized a team.

Comment: The "fence sitters" and opposition have terminated their temporary and partial truce of criticism of the Tam regime and the anvil chorus is again in full swing. The publication of the budget and constitution of the Natl Provisional Council which shld occur shortly may mute some of this criticism. Magnitude of probs besetting Tam are such however it wld seem unrealistic to expect that Tam can maintain pace which will satisfy notoriously critical Vietnamese.

HEATH

790.5/8–652: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET KANEOHE, HAWAII, August 6, 1952—10 p. m.

Secto 13. Rptd info Canberra 6, Wellington 6, London 6, Tokyo 4, Taipei 4, Manila 4, Djakarta 4, Paris 1, Saigon 4. Secretary opened Wednesday morning session[2] with full treatment SEA area. He assured Council US regards this area of great strategic importance from every point of view. Vital part of area is Indochina. To strengthen it we have urged French to move more quickly on transfer of administrative power to three Associated States. Progress has been slow but at present French have probably gone as far as possible.

Secondly, we encouraged development Vietnam Army, supplying equipment therefor in belief this most hopeful way in which to encourage stiffness of opposition to communism. We have been concerned by decline in offensive spirit of French since death of De Lattre and some indications their efforts have become holding operation which we consider mistake.

Secretary described Vietnam Forces and also Viet Minh Army indicating that if this latter force augmented by substantial numbers Chinese troops it could probably not be successfully opposed.

Secretary then read paragraphs 27 to 32 of *Ad Hoc* Committee report on SEA. He also read British modifications which US believes made report useless. In our opinion military consultation re SEA could not produce desired results if officers were compelled to confine discussions to a consideration of resistance in Indochina only.[3]

We are convinced that SEA should not be allowed to fall. One thing we can do to prevent this is issue clear warning to Chinese Commies that attack would have grave consequences. However, we cannot issue such warning which has preventative quality without deciding what to do to back it up. This leads to dilemma that we can do nothing unless politicians will permit unrestricted military talks. Secretary then read from guidance paper worked out in London to reach agreement between govts so that such military talks might take place. He added that France and UK had approved guidance paper but US not yet convinced in present form it will permit recommendations on necessary possible courses of military action.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

The Secretary of State was in Hawaii for the First Meeting of the ANZUS Council, Aug. 4–6. For documentation on that conference, see volume XII.

[2] For the text of the United States minutes of the Fifth Session of the ANZUS Council meeting, Wednesday, Aug. 6, see *ibid.*

[3] For the text of the report of the Five-Power *Ad Hoc* Committee of military representatives, Feb. 5, and documentation on subsequent political-military discussions regarding the defense of Southeast Asia, see *ibid.*

. . . .

Secretary replying to above queries said there was no categorical answer re attitude of French but evidence indicated that with our help they would continue fight. He felt French Govt was solid in staying in IC although strong elements outside present Govt wanted to get out. Two factors worked in favor present Govt attitude: (1) It was easy to say French should get out but difficult to do; (2) There is close connection between French withdrawal in IC and attitude of people in North Africa toward French.

The great problem is heavy drain on French economy and manpower which prevents French from taking steps it would like to take in defense of Europe. Now, however, French have some hope as they can say they are building Army in IC which will enable eventual withdrawal French forces. Moreover, it is help if we continuously assure French that what it is doing in IC is in common interest in fight against Commie aggression.

Re SEA defense talks Secretary said we hope to obtain clear recommendations on a series of alternative plans. He then turned to Admiral Radford[4] for opinion as to whether Commies could be stopped in SEA.

Radford analyzed situation in SEA in following manner: United States, France and Britain think alike re importance SEA but are not working together politically. British and French political thought influenced by their businessmen is that they can hold on by sitting tight and accepting no risks such as those inherent in series of recommended military actions. In Radford's opinion this attitude is wrong. Despite risks to Hong Kong and IC we should sit down and talk frankly. We should not forget that Chinese too have serious problems: That they have large forces on paper but not so many trained divisions; that they do not have our mobility; that they are vulnerable logistically.

The Commies are making greatest advances in shortest time in Asia, but we can stop them if we make up our minds to do so. Even static stage of creating strength in Formosa will make Commies think before attacking Hong Kong. IC can be held but not by landing ground forces there which would be great mistake. To prevent Commie successes in IC we might have to do all sorts of things running risk for example of attack on Hong Kong. In reply to further questions concerning possibility our military action might lead to all-out war with China, Radford said term "all-out war" was incomprehensible. We are already engaged in such a war with Commie China but one limited to single theatre.

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[4] Adm. Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific, and U.S. Pacific Fleet. For Radford's account of U.S. policy with respect to Indochina, 1950–1954, see *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford*, edited by Stephen Jurika, Jr. (Stanford, Calif., Hoover Institution Press, 1980), pp. 339–449.

In reply to questions concerning caliber Vietnam officials, Secretary and Allison stated that well-trained Vietnam authorities were scarce and Govt therefore had difficulty in taking over reconquered areas. Problem of training administrators and military leaders, however, was proceeding and with US assistance there was improvement and it was hoped this would continue.

In response to Australian request, Secretary discussed briefly situation as he saw it in Burma, Siam, Malaya and Indonesia in all of which he found disturbing signs of weakness although it was pointed out that situation in Burma brighter than year ago.

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Meeting adjourned.

ACHESON

751G.11/7-3052 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, August 8, 1952—3:55 p. m.

294. No distribution outside Department. Eyes only Amb. Urtel 248, Jul 30. Even after making all allowances for oriental attitude toward these matters, Dept seriously concerned at your report of Bao Dai's finances. Publicity will have most adverse effect on US public and official opinion in connection with our whole IC policy. Nevertheless, question of how much Vietnamese Govt wishes to devote to Bao Dai is largely internal question and one which, when Tam publishes budget as indicated your tel 285,[2] will presumably come to public attn and result in public discussion in Vietnam, Fr and here in near future.

We do not believe we shld take specific position on overall matter, particularly until we have more complete info as to local administrative responsibilities financed by Bao Dai from private means. We do, however, believe that we are justified in assuming in conjunction with Fr firmest possible position regarding further transfers abroad designed to build up Bao Dai's private means. At time when Fr and US taxpayers are supporting soldiers of Viet Nam and Fr in major effort to save Vietnam from Commie aggression, we cannot tolerate selfish transactions demonstrative of lack of faith all our efforts whether Bao Dai or others are involved.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] In telegram 285 from Saigon, Aug. 2, not printed, Ambassador Heath reported that Premier Tam had informed him that a government budget had been prepared and would soon be published. (751G.5/8-252)

Dept feels this matter goes beyond question of Bao Dai and that, undoubtedly many others, both Fr and Vietnamese are being authorized to make or are making similarly unjustifiable transfers. We suggest, unless you perceive objection, you shld take it up with Letourneau, endeavoring to secure adoption of policy which will make impossible further transfers of flight capital not justified by current exchange regs. Adoption of such policy shld work no hardship on Bao Dai who can certainly finance his activities abroad from funds already available to him.

You shld also discuss whole situation first with Letourneau and, then in your discretion with Nguyen De and Bao Dai, with particular reference to need for placing imperial finances on basis that will not discourage efforts and sacrifices of Viet people or of their Allies in Fr and U.S. We think, however, Letourneau shld carry ball on this one. We await your report and suggestions.

BRUCE

751G.5/8–1552 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, August 15, 1952—4 p. m.

382. Dept pass Paris, London; rptd info Paris 95 for MacArthur,[1] London 8; Hanoi, Singapore unnumbered. It is of utmost importance that Fr–Viet mil effort in Tonkin shld not deteriorate into mere holding and cleanup operation leaving initiative to Commie VM. A mil near stalemate wld tend to perpetuate polit near stalemate.

Actually, however, even if the offensive spirit of command and troops were at highest pitch no effective offensive cld be undertaken against VM because Fr–Viet forces lack indispensable element to force the elusive enemy to battle—namely sufficient planes for more massive air drops of parachute battalions. Lack of transport for air drops has long been realized by MAAG and Def and Delattre and more recently Letourneau have pleaded for sufficient air transport, but their requests have largely failed because of our lack of planes; specifically of C–47's which have not been produced for some years. It is to be regretted that when Letourneau presented his requests in Wash in June last Gen Salan's survey of sitn had not developed into definite plan of bringing one or more of VM divs, now resting and recruiting, to bay in early autumn through a three battalion parachute drop on enemy's rear. This operation requires loan of about 45 C–47's or their equivalent. This is clearly set forth in tel 54953 of Gen Trapnell, Chief of MAAG, from AFOMS.[2]

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[1] Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of Embassy at Paris.

According to Air Force Commander Chassin only about 30 additional Fr transport pilots wld be required. They cld be loaned from Fr Metropolitan forces without difficulty. Chassin states there are only about 20 Fr Metropolitan C–47's available; one incomplete squadron and six training planes at Toulouse.

If USAF pays heed to Gen Trapnell's tel we certainly shld be able to round up 25 planes around the Pac or even in the states on a temporary loan basis. Against this being done is the natural conservatism of Fr Def Ministry, probable opposition of NATO (Paris 26, Aug 1)[3] which has no responsibility for this actual war in progress here, and natural reluctance of our own Air Force to lend even for a short period any of its transport planes.

Yet the urgent need here is for victories which are possible if Salan gets loan of crews and planes without delay.

If Depts of State and Def will insist both vis-à-vis Fr and our own aviation, those planes can probably be found and loaned.

I believe we must bring to this prob same sense of urgency which animated Berlin and Korean airlifts.

If we fail to act with speed and decision then Franco-Viet forces are probably condemned to costly and dangerous near stalement in IC for months to come—if not longer.[4]

HEATH

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[2] Not printed.

[3] In telegram 731 from Paris (repeated to Saigon as telegram 26), Aug. 1, not printed, the Embassy in France reported that General Salan had raised the issue of transport planes with Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe, on July 31. General Gruenther had suggested that General Salan discuss the matter with General Ridgway, the Supreme Allied Commander. (751G.5/8–152)

[4] In telegram 362 to Saigon (repeated to Paris as telegram 951), Aug. 19, the Department of State stated that the issue of additional transport planes was receiving active attention. It had been discussed with the Department of Defense that day. Defense was asking the Military Assistance Advisory Group at Saigon for additional information. Heath was informed that the Department of State endorsed his recommendations and recognized the need for prompt action, and was assured that Defense held similar views. (751G.5/8–1552)

751G.00/8–2652: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, August 26, 1952—6 p. m.

454. Rptd info Paris 106, Hanoi unnumbered. Pres Tam informed Emb off yesterday first mtg of provisional natl council wld take place

in Saigon Sept 1. He expects to be able increase membership of council very shortly thereafter, following promulgation of decree permitting org of labor unions, which Pres stated now in final drafting stage. He hopes to be able hold elections for Natl Assembly on or about Jan 1 and said electoral system wld be primarily based on traditional Vietnamese village structure. He anticipates that village council of notables directly chosen by inhabitants will elect reps to provincial assemblies, which in turn will elect members of Natl Assembly. Distribution of seats, in President's opinion, will probably conform to fol pattern: Approx 40 seats each for North and South Vietnam and 20 seats for Central Vietnam, thus giving presumptive total membership of about 100 for Assembly.

Difficulties inherent in organization and holding of election in war-ravaged country were underlined by Tam who seems determined, however, to proceed with this primary phase of his program. He described village council of notables as ideal basis for Viet electoral system because of its closeness to people, who are already familiar with its functions. He believes village inhabitants are accustomed by long habit to choice of most honest of their fellow citizens as members of council of notables, which in turn can be relied upon with more assurance than any other body to elect reputable reps to provincial assemblies. He referred to this process as kind of democratic purification from lower to upper polit levels and indicated his belief that it provides best method of giving people indispensable sense of participation in polit affairs in harmony with natl and local custom.

Tam spoke earnestly and with measure of quiet pride in his program of reforms, which he believes will serve in time as powerful attractive force not only to nationalist fence-sitters but also to many non-communists still in Viet Minh zone. He seems convinced that it will serve to accelerate what he described as a marked decline (grosse baisse) in VM civilian morale, which he attributes primarily to war weariness and to arbitrary exactions and reprisals of VM mil on local populations. He cited as case in point what he is certain is large measure of bluff in VM agrarian policy in accordance with which farmer having recd grant of land is never sure when it may be snatched from him again for purely arbitrary polit reasons. He contrasted this with his own program of land distribution, which provides for duly certified and legally registered transfers of land, thus increasing individual farmers sense of security of tenure and enhancing his stake in maintenance of order. He obviously believes that people will respond favorably to concrete achievements of his reform program, as goals laid down are successively reached.

HEATH

INR–NIE files

National Intelligence Estimate

SECRET
NIE 35/2

WASHINGTON, 29 August 1952.

PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA THROUGH MID–1953 [1]

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the internal situation throughout Indochina and to estimate French and Chinese Communist capabilities and probable courses of action with respect to Indochina through mid-1953.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The outlook in Indochina through mid-1953 is for continued stalemate, with both sides playing a waiting game. We believe that the French Union forces may make some slight territorial gains, but will not win a decisive victory during this period.

2. We believe that France will continue its war effort in Indochina, but will attempt to transfer to the US a progressively larger part of the economic and military burden of the war, and to reduce its manpower commitments by developing the national forces of the Associated States.

3. We believe that France will seek to conduct a "holding action." The French have apparently come to believe that they can no longer achieve a military decision in Indochina and that the Indochina problem can only be solved within the context of some form of over-all settlement in the Far East, perhaps following the Korean war.

4. We believe that the Chinese Communists will not invade Indochina during the period of this estimate, whether or not hostilities in Korea are concluded. Present Communist strategy in Indochina is achieving considerable advantage with relatively small risk. We are unable to estimate what effect the expansion of the Korean conflict beyond Korea would have on Chinese Communist capabilities and intentions with respect to Indochina.

5. We believe that the Chinese Communists will continue their present type of support to the Viet Minh, but it appears almost certain that this type of support would not in itself enable the Viet Minh to win a decisive victory in Indochina.

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[1] According to a note on the cover sheet, "The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 28 August 1952."

6. However, we estimate that if present trends continue, the difficulties which France will face in supporting major military efforts in both Europe and Indochina and in maintaining its position in North Africa, will in the longer run weaken the French Union's ability and determination to continue resistance in Indochina.

The Current Situation

7. Since the publication of NIE–35/1, "Probable Developments in Indochina through Mid-1952," dated 3 March 1952, there has been no major change in the disposition or the relative numerical strength of the French Union and Viet Minh forces. French Union forces undertook clearing operations in the Tonkin Delta area during the spring months of 1952. Since that time seasonal rains have brought a greatly reduced level of combat activity in Tonkin, where 115,000 French Union regular troops currently confront an estimated 85,000 Viet Minh regular troops. Throughout Indochina, the Viet Minh continue to conduct guerrilla and naval mine warfare and have maintained sufficient pressure against French Union forces to prevent the transfer of forces to Tonkin. The Viet Minh for the most part still control those areas of Indochina held at the time of publication of NIE–35/1. (See maps.)[2]

8. The French Union forces have made a slight gain over the Viet Minh in over-all combat effectiveness. French Union forces are now superior to the Viet Minh in unit fire power and matériel, a gain attributable principally to the increased delivery of US MDAP equipment. Such equipment is superior in quality to that being given to the Viet Minh by the Chinese Communists and far greater in quantity.[*]

9. Chinese Communist logistic support to the Viet Minh appears to fluctuate considerably. During the last quarter of 1951 the Viet Minh are believed to have received about 2,000 tons of supplies. Deliveries probably fell considerably below this level in the first quarter of 1952, and despite an apparent increase since May 1952, the level of aid is not believed to have reached that of late 1951. Chinese Communist support, except for a few recent border forays by minor Chinese Communist forces against anti-Communist irregulars, appears still to be limited to logistic, technical, and advisory assistance.

10. A continuing problem facing the Viet Minh appears to be a shortage of food, but minimum requirements are apparently being met

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[2] Two maps, "Indochina–China Border Area" and "Indochina," are not reproduced.

[*] As of 30 April 1952, a total of about [$]347,000,000 had been expended by the US for military aid to Indochina (in addition to $46,000,000 in economic assistance in FY's 1951 and 1952). Among the items shipped have been 657 combat vehicles, 190 aircraft, 5,565 trucks, 78,713 small arms and automatic weapons (including 1,464 rocket launchers), 1,400 mortars and artillery pieces, 18,000,000 rounds of ammunition of all types, 260,000 rockets and mines, 3,869 radio sets, and more than 200 small naval vessels. [Footnote in the source text.]

by rice raids into the Tonkin Delta and imports from Communist China. The Viet Minh is having difficulty in exploiting its manpower potential, but appears to be replacing its combat losses. Viet Minh morale during the present period of relative inactivity is difficult to assess. Morale among rank and file Viet Minh military forces is believed to be only fair, but morale among higher military and political echelons is believed to be good. Whatever the state of morale, effective Communist control over Viet Minh-held territory is being maintained. Although little evidence on the point is available, such evidence as we have reveals no serious friction between the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists.

11. Political instability characterizes conditions in Vietnam and Cambodia. In Vietnam, the most important of the Associated States, the government of Premier Nguyen Van Tam, installed in June, has thus far failed to mobilize widespread popular support, although its initial actions suggest the possibility of greater administrative efficiency than that shown by the preceding government. Several outstanding nationalist leaders have refused to be identified with the government. In Cambodia, political unrest has increased in recent months. In the wake of mounting student agitation and the defection of the prominent nationalist, Son Ngoc Thanh, the King dismissed Premier Huy Kanthoul and currently rules by royal prerogative. Guerrilla activities by the Viet Minh and by dissident nationalist groups have continued.

French Union Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action

12. If France maintains its present war effort in Indochina and the Chinese Communists do not intervene in force, the capability of the French Union forces to resist Communist military pressure will probably improve slightly during the period of this estimate, largely as a result of the assimilation of US MDAP aid and the development of some experienced native military units and leadership. The French Union forces will probably during this period strengthen their control of the Tonkin Delta area. These forces may also be capable during this period of making forays outside the Tonkin perimeter to attack Viet Minh military concentrations. French Union forces will not, however, have the capability to gain and maintain effective control over major areas of Viet Minh-held territory during the period of this estimate.

13. We believe that there will be little or no improvement in political strength within the Associated States in the foreseeable future. In Vietnam, the people generally do not recognize a personal stake in the war effort and apparently still mistrust the French more than they fear the Communists. Accordingly, even if Premier Tam should be able to carry out his proposed economic and political programs, the

people will probably continue to be apathetic toward the regime, and over-all political strength and stability will not be greatly increased. Political unrest will probably continue in Cambodia. No significant changes are foreseen in Laos, the most isolated and stable of the Associated States.

14. In the absence of Chinese Communist intervention, developments in Indochina will be primarily determined by the capabilities and intentions of metropolitan France. There are strong forces impelling France toward reducing its commitments in Indochina. After an exhausting six-year war in Indochina, France is still confronted by a steady increase in the costs of the Indochina war which currently takes almost one-third of the total French military budget.† In terms of professional military manpower, particularly officers and noncommissioned officers, the cost is even greater. This financial and manpower drain is seriously reducing France's ability to meet its NATO obligations and to maintain the power position on the continent which it considers necessary to balance a rearmed Germany.

15. The French effort in Indochina is also influenced by fear of Chinese Communist intervention. The French are apprehensive that substantial French victories would bring about such intervention, with which the French, because of their limited capabilities, would be unable to cope. As a result, the French have apparently come to believe that they can no longer achieve a military decision in Indochina and that the Indochina problem can only be solved within the context of some form of over-all settlement in the Far East, perhaps following the Korean War.

16. We believe that despite the forces impelling the French to reduce their commitments in Indochina, considerations of prestige and France's position as a world power will induce France to maintain the current scale of its effort in Indochina, at least during the period of this estimate. France will, however:

a. Seek to conduct a "holding action" in Indochina.

b. Continue, at the same time, to seek US–UK guarantees of direct military support should Chinese Communist intervention occur.

c. Continue efforts to inject the Indochina issue into any general negotiations on Far Eastern questions.

d. Continue its attempts to transfer to the US a progressively larger part of the economic and military burden of the war.

e. Accelerate its efforts to reduce its manpower commitments by developing the national forces of the Associated States.

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†Over-all French 1952 military appropriations to date have been nearly 1,400 billion francs ($4 billion). 1952 military appropriations for the Associated States amount to nearly 450 billion francs ($1.3 billion) including 68 billion francs ($194 million) as subsidy for the National Armies of the Associated States. [Footnote in the source text.]

Viet Minh and Chinese Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action

17. If the Chinese Communists continue to provide only logistic, advisory, and technical assistance, the Viet Minh will probably not be able to increase their strength or effectiveness significantly during the coming year. Viet Minh forces will continue their tactics of harassment, infiltration, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare. They will also continue to wage mine warfare in the inland waterways and along the coasts of Indochina, an activity which the French as yet have been unable to counteract. They will also probably launch new frontal attacks on the French defense perimeter in Tonkin in September–October when the present rainy season ends. However, unless Chinese Communist troops move into Indochina in force, we believe that the Viet Minh will not be able to achieve a decisive victory in Tonkin or elsewhere in Indochina.

18. The Chinese Communists will probably have the capability during the period of this estimate to improve airfields in south China, to continue improvement of transportation facilities, to continue stockpiling along the Indochina border, and to increase their present level of logistic support for the Viet Minh. If the present level of support is increased significantly, the Viet Minh capabilities for tactics described will be somewhat increased, but it appears almost certain that outside logistic support would not in itself enable the Viet Minh to win a decisive victory in Indochina. The Chinese Communists will probably retain their present capability to commit and support logistically 150,000 Chinese Communist troops for an invasion of Indochina. This capability will probably not be materially affected by the continuation of Chinese Communist operations within Korea at current or expanded levels.

19. A Chinese Communist force of 150,000, added to those of the Viet Minh, would probably be able to force French Union units to evacuate Tonkin before effective assistance could be brought to bear. The Chinese Communists now have, and will probably continue to have during the period of this estimate, sufficient jet and piston aircraft, independent of operations in Korea, for damaging attacks against French Union installations in Tonkin, and, with surprise, for neutralizing the French Air Forces in Tonkin. At this time, however, there is no indication that the Chinese Communists have begun the necessary preparation of airfields and other facilities in south China to permit the commitment of the CCAF to operations in Indochina. Development of the air facilities in south China, particularly those along the Nanning rail line, would require three to six months for preparation for sustained combat operations; those on Hainan Island would require two to six weeks to develop for such operations. The

capability of the Chinese Communists for deploying air units at any time into the south China area for surprise attacks against the French in Tonkin should not be overlooked, although such attacks could not be carried out over an extended period without the preparation described above.

20. We believe that whether or not hostilities are concluded in Korea the Chinese Communists will not invade Indochina during the period of this estimate. The Chinese Communists probably have the capability successfully to invade Indochina, but present evidence does not indicate that such an invasion is imminent. Moreover, the following considerations militate against a direct intervention by Chinese Communist military forces:

a. Present Communist strategy, while not bringing immediate victory in Indochina, appears nevertheless to be achieving considerable advantage. It diverts badly-needed French and US power from Europe with relatively little cost to the Communists. It may weaken the determination and ability of both the French and the Indo-Chinese to continue resistance, and thus provide the Communists with an opportunity to aggravate differences among the Western Powers.

b. Communist leadership is aware that the West, and in particular the US, might retaliate against Communist China if Communist China should invade Indochina. On the other hand, Communist leadership is also aware that non-Communist opinion is divided as to the merits and timing of such retaliation. We believe, however, that fear of such retaliation and of the major war which might result are probably important deterrents to open Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina.

21. We believe, however, that during the period of this estimate the Chinese Communists will continue their present type of support to the Viet Minh. The Chinese Communists may introduce combat troops in the guise of "volunteers." We estimate, however, that the probable Communist fear of provoking major Western retaliation will restrain the Chinese Communists from committing "volunteers" in numbers sufficient to assure a decisive military victory for the Viet Minh.

22. We are unable to estimate what effect the expansion of the Korean conflict beyond Korea would have on Chinese Communist capabilities and intentions with respect to Indochina.

Outlook

23. Through mid-1953, the outlook in Indochina is for a continued stalemate, with both sides playing a waiting game. We believe that the French Union forces may make some slight territorial gains, but will not win a decisive victory during this period.

24. However, we estimate that if present trends continue, the difficulties which France will face in supporting major military efforts

in both Europe and Indochina and in maintaining its position in North Africa, will in the longer run weaken the French Union's ability and determination to continue resistance in Indochina.

751G.00/9–652: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, September 6, 1952—4 p. m.

533. Rptd info Paris unnumbered. Justice William O. Douglas[1] was my house guest from Aug 26 to September 2. I arranged for him to travel Hanoi and Hue, entertained for him and arranged for him meet leading Fr and Vietnamese officials and personalities including Letourneau and Pres Tam. Letourneau gave him luncheon.

The noon before his departure he was luncheon guest of Pickering and Gregory of USIS and, unknown to me, local newspaper correspondents were invited to affair. Douglas had previously stated he desired no press conf. At the luncheon he stated to Reuter correspondent "There is no place in SEA I have so far visited where I have seen so many forces of disintegration pulling asunder as in IC. If all the popular forces were behind the ruling powers in IC, the war shld end in matter of few weeks. One of the most depressing statements I ever read is that of Governor Thomas Dewey of New York state in his current book on SEA; saying the IC program was purely military."[2] Douglas is also quoted as stating he "did not mean that Amer aid to IC shld be withdrawn or slackened." But he "wanted the Amer Govt to see that IC should not prove a new China as far as Amer aid is concerned".

In his talks with me Douglas expressed full realization of the contribution made by the Fr and progress realized here in past years.

The Fr High Commissariat here has complained to me of his press statements altho no complaint was made of another interview in Hong Kong which declared that it wld take five years to construct a Vietnamese Govt to govern without Fr aid and Fr troops were temporarily indispensable to Southeast Asia. I informed High Commissariat that Douglas was here on private trip, his views on fon affairs were highly personal and highly independent.

HEATH

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[1] Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

[2] Governor Dewey visited the Far East, including Indochina, during the summer of 1951. He described his impressions in *Journey to the Far Pacific* (Garden City, New York, 1952).

751G.5/9–852: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, September 8, 1952—7:41 p.m.

1328. No distribution outside Department except Defense. Eyes only Dunn and Heath. Deptel 1168 Paris, Saigon 434 Aug 29.[2] Secy Lovett has approved plan furnish transport aircraft to IC for forthcoming offensive operations as originally negotiated with Fr by MAAG Paris and formalized by Pentagon.[3] It has already been put into action. Details available MAAGs.

MAAG Paris reported Sep 5 to Pentagon Fr had now stated it wld be impossible for them carry out their share of the plan by date scheduled, specifically that they cld not make pilot and maintenance crews available in time both to move those aircraft coming from Fr and Belgium to IC and man those to be delivered in IC by FEAF. They therefore have requested postponement from Nov first to Dec first. That timing is one of most essential features of overall plan, as originally projected by Gen Salan, and as now being made possible largely by Amer matériel aid shld be too obvious to Fr to require argument. Pentagon has been obliged assign special priority this project and withdraw planes from other vital areas order to make transport aircraft required available in IC by date scheduled. They have now agreed to do so, not without considerable sacrifice but in recognition urgent need and prospective dividends. They and Dept expect Fr make similar sacrifices as necessary.

Dept is informed that wheels of plan are now turning to such an extent that Pentagon wld be required to make complete new study of problem before decision cld be made on setting back process one month. It wld be regrettable if after major obstacles of availability of aircraft had been met and overcome, operations were to be postponed and their success jeopardized by Fr failure carry out their share responsibility at this stage.

Therefore urge you make strong approach appropriate auths Paris and Saigon separately or in conjunction Chiefs MAAGs to end that Fr agree carry out their share responsibilities.[4]

ACHESON

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[1] Drafted by William M. Gibson, Deputy Director of PSA. Repeated to Saigon as telegram 500.

[2] Not printed.

[3] By letter of Sept. 12, William C. Foster, Deputy Secretary of Defense, informed Secretary of State Acheson of approval of the plan by the Department of Defense. (Secretary's Letters, lot 56 D 459, "Defense")

[4] Telegram 573 from Ambassador Heath at Saigon, Sept. 12, read as follows: "Yesterday I presented in strongest terms Fr failure carry out their share responsibilities for new additional aircraft to Janot who is Letourneau's real deputy here and he promised to send urgent telegram immediately to Letourneau now in Paris urging him to intervene strongly with Fr mil authorities to provide pilots and maintenance crews without delay." (751G.5/9–1252)

751G.00/9–1852 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, September 18, 1952—7 p. m.

621. Rptd info Paris 127, Hanoi unn. I saw Pres Tam yesterday fol his return from trip to Hanoi which he felt had been very successful. While in Hanoi he completed arrangements with Fr to turn over Hung Yen Sector to Vietnamese troops. He had satisfactorily settled, he thought, certain differences with Binh particularly with regard to the Gamos though he remained unconvinced that the Gamos, even with the reforms introduced, were really a good instrument for pacification of liberated sectors. He said, however, that there had been so much publicity about them that it wld not be politically advisable to replace them immediately. Five Gamo teams wld carry on for few months to come.

He was pleased with the extremely cordial reception given him by the Chinese community of Hanoi which seemed to be more outspokenly anti-Communist, pro-Chinese nationalist and confident of victory over the Communists than he had known them. He surmised that the Chinese businessmen had finally realized there was no place for them in a Communist system and were at last taking a stand.

He said the taking over the Hung Yen and later other sectors would involve additional expenditures for the govt but he wld be able to find the money. He was insisting successfully on better tax collections, and though without increasing rates he wld be able to increase tax revenues by 30 percent. In the Cholon District collections were increasing at the rate of a million piasters monthly. He had discharged, placed on the inactive list or transferred to less important posts some 60 functionaries known to have been grafting and he expected weed out a great many more. He had not judged it politically wise to publish these dismissals but felt that they were known throughout the population and in official ranks.

He said that while his relations with the Fr were those of mutual esteem and liking he wld have some continuing difficulties in persuading the Fr steadily to abandon their former authority and habits of intervention in matters of internal administration. He was greatly heartened by recent talks with Janot who in effect is Letourneau's second in command. Janot understood, he said, the necessity of the Fr increasingly effacing themselves. Gautier, technically second in command, was more a difficult problem for he had the old colonial background and connection. While in the north he had issued orders for the administration to proceed immediately with the election in each village of a council of notables. Once the village councils were formed they wld select delegates to the Provincial Assembly and when the latter were formed they wld in turn elect delegates to the National Assembly. He was respecting the regional system of Vietnam, however, since delegates to the National Assembly from each region wld also serve as members of an advisory council to the Governor of the region.

HEATH

751G.00/9–1952 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State [1]

SECRET HANOI, September 19, 1952—noon.

163. Dept pass Saigon; rptd info Saigon 121. Ref Deptel 205, Sept. 1 [*15*].[2] It is not only difficult to generalize about VM zones, treating them as single bloc, but probably misleading also. It is even more hazardous to make the leap from conclusions re state of VM morale and physical conditions to hypothesis covering effect of these on military action. Ordinary rules may well be considered suspect in any discussion of this rebellion which appears have lost substantially none of its moral force through six years of varied military fortunes.

. . . morale in upper Annam and Tonkin, working from south to north, in general about as follows: In interzone 4, widespread discontent among various civilian groups, owing principally heavy agricultural tax collections; some covert and overt resistance to VM authorities on part of Catholics, Buddhists and Muongs. In delta, . . . peasants continue cast lot with VM to extent of keeping troop movements quiet and hiding arms; . . . that attributable to better troop behavior among VM than among French Union. Believe explanation must include inability French Union troops guarantee peasants against VM reprisals once they have moved on; this is so at least in areas subject frequent military action. In south delta bishoprics of Phatdiem and Buichu, where nationalist fire long burnt more brightly than anti-VM spirit, there is evidence of significant revulsion of feeling following overt VM attacks on Catholic Church and bishops. On this subject see Contels 811, June 5 and 159, Sept. 17.[3]

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

[2] Telegram 569 to Saigon (repeated to Hanoi as telegram 205), Sept. 15, read as follows:

"Dept attempting evaluate numerous recent reports of deteriorating conditions within VM zones. Statements allege rapid currency depreciation, food and equipment shortages, declining civilian and mil morale, and difficulties replacing battle losses particularly trained cadres. Realize combat operations after rainy season will provide best test these assertions but request urgently any additional data now available these and related subjs. Dept wld welcome your views re general trend within VM zones recent months." (751G.00/9–1652)

[3] Neither printed.

Document dated Aug 20 recently obtained by Consulate now being processed for transmittal purporting be training materials for political agents compiled by authorities interzone 3 (delta) to enable former prepare troops for fall and winter operations indicates VM concern with new weapons and materials French Union forces have recd "from other countries," food and clothing shortages, "terrorism" "fallacious propaganda" which may have effect of developing "pro-American trends or fear of America or defeatism. On credit side, document points to relative thinness French Union forces, concentration of which any one plan creates weak spots elsewhere favoring VM attack; tenuous morale on French Union side which shld make it easy "shatter puppet army and govt"; improved techniques, training, weapons and experience on VM side following "last victorious spring and summer"; the "Chinese liberation army coming to the border" will bring VM "real help" and "our people and army will thus be encouraged to fight until victory." Document goes on to characterize last fall and winter as defensive period; indicates forthcoming season will also be defensive, but directed to preparation of "general counter-offensive." For nation as whole coming fall and winter will be devoted to striking at weak points "to relieve pressure on Bac Vietu," to defeating all clean-up operations and to training armed forces and agents "for mobile war." In interzone 3 plan is "open continuous fronts to attack enemy" continuously attack RC 5 and 6, hamper clean-up operations and frustrate "enemy plan for occupation of Ninhbinh which is to be used as recruiting base for puppet army." Propaganda must be stepped up "to attract soldiers from puppet army as well as African and European soldiers." Population must be clear-sighted, neither "pessimistic nor over-confident and be prepared to attack the enemy."

In conclusion, "we must never lose courage, no matter how great hardships we suffer. Discouragement is not right attitude, although we must not be over-confident when some successes obtained. Over-confidence certainly leads to failure."

In summary, this document reflects concern but not desperation.

In Hanoi clandestine VM organization said be trying recuperate from heavy blows dealt it by Franco-Viet security services. There is evidence Hanoi front members seeking authorization undertake terrorist activities in order restore morale and unity and demonstrate VM still powerful here. Morale in Viet Bac believed higher than elsewhere, owing proximity Chinese Commie aid supplies, ease in propagandizing and remoteness from French-controlled zones.

French have given some emphasis to reports of low morale in reg VM divisions. . . . VM takes great pains train troops to deceive interrogators if captured, and . . . such reports shld be treated with reserve. While morale of regional guerrilla units fighting in delta may be low owing shortage equipment and other local factors, it is probably dangerous apply conclusion reached concerning these forces to reg divisions. No evidence at hand to indicate serious resentment in VM zones against Chinese Commie advisers, cadres or other symbols of Chinese Commie control, despite historical precedent to justify such resentment and render it probable. In general VM army appears adequately fed. Food shortages suffered mainly by civilians, and although undernourishment widespread, there is no evidence of famine. Chinese Commie military assistance to VM appears be continuing at high level and may be increasing. Chinese Commie technicians are aiding VM develop arms plants, roads and mineral exploitation works. VM army believed be larger, better armed, trained and equipped than at any previous time, hence capable of considerable impact when and if it launches another large-scale offensive.

On other side of coin, VM economy appears in sorry plight. Ho Chi Minh piastre depreciating rapidly as supplies become tighter and French Union aerial and land attacks interrupt production and trade. Taxes are collected in paddy. Central govt has little idea of receipts or expenditures in remote areas. VM suffering serious shortage of medical personnel as many doctors have rallied to this side, but there appears be increase in VM stocks medical supplies; no epidemics reported. There is evidence also certain high VM officials, including Commies believe Sino-Soviet aid will never increase to point of permitting decisive VM victory over French until and unless World War III comes to resolve the problem.

In summary, failing massive intervention from outside IC there seems be little reason anticipate early major shift in present balance in the north. VM material weaknesses for time being are probably offset by greater political effectiveness in fields propaganda, elimination of corruption, competence and morale of officials and in general appeal to masses. If national govt proved able make real advances these respects and thus tend estrange from VM its important nationalist but non-Commie elements, it wld have dealt VM graver blow than any of which present military forces are capable. Linares has shown no sign whatever of easy optimism, and although he has often mentioned individual instances of VM weaknesses, he has never hinted to me that he was up against other than a tenacious foe the end of whose capacity for battle was nowhere in sight.

STURM

Editorial Note

At its 603d Meeting, September 19, 1952, the United Nations Security Council considered French draft resolutions providing for the admission of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to the United Nations (documents S/2758, S/2759, and S/2760, September 2). The Council also considered a draft resolution presented by the Soviet Union providing for the admission of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (document S/2773, September 15). In the voting which followed discussion, the proposals regarding the admission of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia each received ten affirmative votes (Brazil, Chile, China, France, Greece, Netherlands, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States), but were rejected as the result of negative votes by the Soviet Union—a permanent member of the Security Council. The Soviet proposal on behalf of the Viet Minh government was defeated by a vote of ten to one.

For the record of the meeting, see United Nations, *Official Records of the Security Council, Seventh Year, 603rd Meeting* (*S/PV. 603*), pages 1–20. Extracts are printed in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, volume I, pages 194–197.

For documentation on the continuing membership question at the United Nations, the general aspects of which reflected upon the status of the applications of the Associated States of Indochina, see volume III, pages 802 ff.

751G.5/9–2052 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, September 20, 1952—6 p. m.

632. Rptd info Paris 129. Gen Salan returned yesterday. He called on me today to express his appreciation of action of US Govt, MAAG and Emb in expediting delivery of addit planes to permit more massive parachute operations. He said he had never seen such an enthusiastic "climate" with regard to continuance of Fr military effort in IC. Even the Socialist Party was favorable. He had been assured that the IC budget for 1953 wld be voted without difficulties. He was pleased with his reception by Gens Ridgway and Gruenther.

He thought Bao Dai had behaved very well during his stay in Fr. There had been some fear that there wld be gambling and night clubbing escapades in Paris. He made good impression on Fr officials with whom he had talked and on Fr press.

He was pleased with Gen Linares victories in Annam and with addit planes soon to arrive he looked forward with optimism to the fall and winter mil operations.

Letourneau will return Saigon Oct 6.

HEATH

511.51G/9–2052: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

CONFIDENTIAL — SAIGON, September 20, 1952—3 p. m.
PRIORITY

633. For Ben Crosby I/R.[2] Topics listed in Depcirtel 208, August 23[3] developed as follows:

1. Info goals.

Primary objective of US policy in Indochina is to prevent this critical area SEA from falling under Commie domination. Forces in being which prevent Commies from achieving military and political victory are (1) armed forces Fr Union and (2) the developing armies of three AS. Only continued effective presence of these forces can prevent Commie pressure from exploiting power vacuum created by existing weakness of AS. Corollary with this objective is to aid govts of these newly independent states to develop an effective progressive program and appeal to counterpersuasive Commie propaganda which exploits nationalist and racial feeling.

Info program must conform to and serve to foster these objectives. Program should contain nothing which would give support to certain extremist elements advocating present withdrawal Fr Union forces from Indochina. It should deliberately soft-pedal suggestions which may be expected to foster anti-Fr attitudes or to stimulate unbridled nationalism. It should be sufficiently imaginative to appeal to peoples of AS without jeopardizing essential basis upon which military effort rests. There are themes which, by positive treatment, may be used to appeal to national aspirations of peoples AS without antagonizing the Fr. Major emphasis should be focussed on positive results accomplished by AS in developing nationhood and on their place as active partners in anti-Commie struggle in which US is powerful, determined ally. Program should endeavor channel nationalistic feelings into productive accomplishments rather than futile obstructionism. Moreover info program should be directed to arousing people AS to consciousness their own imminent peril in face Commie danger and to inform them of need for active cooperation with nations free world in order to overcome this peril.

2. Effectiveness of info devices in achieving goals.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in three parts.

[2] Director, Congressional and Public Information, U.S. International Information Administration.

[3] Circular telegram 208 of Aug. 23, requested chiefs of missions at major posts to summarize the information objectives and comment on the effectiveness of the information programs being carried out in their respective countries, for the use of a Senate committee investigating the U.S. foreign information program. (511.00/8–2352) For documentation on the U.S. information program, see volume II.

Given wide-spread hostilities and disturbed conditions limiting scope of contacts with Indochinese, most effective measurable device is publications program chiefly designed for leader. groups. This evidenced by heavy first returns of recently launched post cards questionnaire. Preliminary examination shows interest far beyond expectation. Greatest impact is film program which now geared to showing to audience total 75 to 100,000 weekly. Since many new customs FE can be traced to Amer films, must be assumed that films is effective program though difficult to determine degree. Library attendance now approximately 200,000 annually which in some cases is due to limited facilities. Heavy demand for English lessons being met with about 40 classes weekly with more than 1,000 on waiting list as well as lessons weekly on five of seven radio stations. Such demand can only be construed as intense interest in US by educated groups. All factors recited must be viewed as effective though degree cannot be accurately measured.

3. Comparative value of various parts of program; should emphasis be changed.

Under present policy of concentrating on leader groups as defined by country plan press and publications program has greatest value since this output can be skillfully tailored. Library, film, radio and exchange of persons can be regarded as valuable auxiliary forces. Some shift of emphasis certainly should be discussed even if eventually rejected. Rural and village populations which make up as much as 80 percent of the 12 million in the non-VM zone are not a primary target group. Yet they are primary target for VM propaganda which follows Soviet line of giving masses saturation treatment. In addition approx 10 million in VM zone not reached by program effort. Daily VM broadcasts maligning US effort AS go unanswered except for sporadic efforts by VOA which not timely nor too effective because of difficulty of reception with average type of radio receiver used here.

4. Caliber of personnel operating program. Of 21 Amers, all but one are serving first assignment and are carrying heavy work load since 9 vacancies exist. As team, caliber of performance is high and what is lacking in experience is more than made up for by intense interest in challenging job, firm belief in program, industry, imagination, ingenuity and intelligence. Further they get things done. Work load serious problem since in past 6 months 4 hospitalized with tropical diseases and 2 classified as no longer fit for duty tropical countries. Two more appear on verge of similar classification. Efficient operation of info program in critical area cannot be sustained on basis of chronic personnel shortage regardless of over-all general high caliber of personnel.

5. Acceptability of info program idea to other mission personnel. Mission personnel are in agreement with the need for an Indo program and fully appreciate its importance as valuable adjunct to furthering US policy in IC. USIS has worked in close coordination with political and economic sections of Emb, and there is general agreement on over-all objective. Excellent personal relationships between USIS and other Emb personnel have been conducive to a free exchange of ideas and a general spirit of mutual cooperativeness.

6. Suggestions for improving program. Most critical and continuing problem is distribution which is lifeline of publication program. At present approx 800,000 publications all types being distributed monthly under supervision 1 Amer officer and with extremely limited transport facilities. Heavy backlog of publications being warehoused at high cost. This cld be remedied with 1 additional Amer officer and as little as 1 or 2 trucks being made available and without any further additional operating costs. Reduction of VOA broadcast to 15 minutes of news daily and additional local programming shld also be seriously considered.

7. Comparison of US info program with that of other countries. USIS efforts are directed primarily toward target groups: (1) leaders, which include intellectuals, professional people and govt officials, (2) teachers and students, and (3) key figures in villages and rural areas. USIS material disseminated primarily through local press, schools, AS Govt orgs including AS info services and Fr info services; other available channel also used. STEM info program useful auxiliary to USIS in publicizing Amer economic aid.

VM propaganda service, which is by far most important "opposition" propaganda org, carries out its program through publications, radio, but especially by means cadre operations, and concentrates on reaching masses. Police state conditions which prevail in VM controlled zones practically eliminate competing propaganda and foster proliferation of Commie indoctrination agencies and programs. In non-VM zones, masses reached largely by clandestine operations Commie cells and cadres and to lesser degree through VM broadcast.

Moscow and Peiping broadcast in Vietnamese to Vietnam but these efforts are greatly overshadowed by VM propaganda and are relatively minor auxiliaries to latter.

Vietnamese info service has in theory one of largest info orgs in SEA—there are about 1,000 info halls. However, because of lack of funds and shortage trained personnel Vietnamese info service relatively ineffective. Depends largely on USIS for films and published materials; to considerable degree on STEM for financial support. Info Min and key personnel of Min have so far not made impressive showing. Through exercise of strict censorship can control material appearing in press.

Info services Cambodia fairly well-developed; Laotian service rudimentary.

Fr info service designed almost wholly to reach intellectuals and to foster appreciation for Fr culture. 95 percent of Fr info service publications are in French whereas almost all USIS publications are in AS languages. Fr info service has done some work along psychological warfare lines in conjunction with USIS.

Fr army has well-developed psychological warfare program directed to distributing anti-VM propaganda and developing of morale AS national armies. Stresses cohesiveness national armies and Fr Union forces.

Fr info service is token service publishing monthly news magazine. Maintains local reading room.

HEATH

751G.00/9–2652 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, September 26, 1952—7 p. m.

673. Rptd info Hanoi unn. Re Deptel 569, September 15, rptd Hanoi.[1] Emb views Hanoi tel 163, Sept 20 [*19*] to Dept as excellent summary sitn North Viet and concurs in estimate contained last para that tel. Fol comments give our view sitn in South and Central Vietnam.

Reports . . . in past few months depict marked deterioration econ conditions VM zones and weariness both populace and cadres with revolutionary struggle. Data . . . indicate VM South Viet Security Service preoccupied with increasing desertions from cadres and hiding of arms in areas threatened by Fr operations in order avoid fighting; commander VM west zone complains he unable organize resistance to Fr union mil operations because lack of fighting spirit among reg troops and lackadaisical attitude militia.

Info in same vein provided by . . . . Leafing thru file recent reports, . . . quoted numerous passages indicating low morale due econ hardships (shortage food, medicine and clothing especially) fear aerial bombardment, nostalgia for relatives, friends and native towns and villages and dissatisfaction with heavy taxes and Commie regimentation. Destruction by aerial bombardment of sluices and other irrigation works drying up rice fields producing great hardships. . . . also said security conditions in cities and towns had improved notably attributing this to difficulty VM encounter in getting persons to perform terrorist acts and to fact populace are less fearful of VM. . . . said that whereas formerly on VM holidays shopkeepers were wary of opening estabs now there is practically no hesitation. Diminution of fear of and sympathy for VM also reported to Emb offs by Viets.

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[1] For text, see footnote 2, p. 252.

Testimony re difficulties prevailing in VM zones comes from VM radio itself, most recent instance being Ho Chi Minh message to South Viet Sept 23 on occasion seventh anniversary commencement "resistance" in South Viet. Ho message while promising victory mentions resistance struggle will be long drawn out and, alluding to hardships faced, asserts greater the difficulty greater must be effort, quoting proverb to effect strength and will of man tested by adversity.

As large part info re conditions VM zones derived from defectors who may be expected paint dark picture to please Fr and Viet Govt offs who question them and to justify their departure, these reports must be treated with some reserve. Nevertheless, severe hardships encountered by populations zones of VM and increasing number of defectors seem sufficiently well substantiated to warrant their acceptance as estab facts.

To what extent these difficulties have affected VM organ and mil units is difficult to ascertain. Janot, Letourneau's Directeur de Cabinet when queried recently on this point by Emb off shrugged his shoulders and stated, altho reports of VM distress numerous at present he not inclined to draw too sanguine conclusions therefrom. Col Harris,[2] who recently completed two years tour strongly held opinion that hardships have not seriously affected fighting capabilities VM troops. There is no instance of defection of top-flight VM; defectors to date have been largely elderly people, women and very young children who constitute mouths to feed which VM can best do without.

On balance Embassy believes that altho VM are undergoing very difficult times we should not permit ourselves to draw too optimistic conclusions therefrom as experience has shown that "belt tightening process" can be carried on almost indefinitely and that small number of zealots can exert tremendous control. Present VM difficulties, however, afford psychological warfare opportunity to boost morale anti-Commie forces and foster increasing disillusionment Viets with Commies.

It remains to be pointed out that in South and Central Vietnam VM civil and mil formations are much less developed than in north. On basis of available info it does not appear that arms of Chi origin have yet come into South Viet or that Chi advisors have played significant role in this region.

HEATH

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[2] Col. Lee V. Harris, former senior Military Attaché at Saigon.

751G.00/10-152 : Circular airgram

The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Offices[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, October 1, 1952—6:10 p. m.

The Department is aware that recent developments with respect to the Governments of Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam are not known or understood by many governments, including those of nearby Asian States. In order to facilitate your task in discussing Indochina with the Governments to which you are accredited, Saigon's telegram No. 652 of September 24th is reproduced in full,[2] which contains an excellent summary of recent and current developments in the three Associated States.

It is stated that many former dependent areas which now enjoy independent status are reluctant to extend diplomatic recognition to the Governments of the three States because of the continuing presence on their soil of French Union troops. It has been similarly stated that although western governments having had adequate experience with world Communism, can appreciate the position of the Governments of Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam in requesting French military assistance to protect their territories against Communist aggression, Asian and Arab States are less concerned with the threat of Communism than they are with western intervention in their affairs. It is hoped that Saigon's telegram will prove useful to our Missions in dealing with these difficult questions.

Saigon telegram No. 652 (Section 1 of 2).

"We agree that Ambassador Bowles' interview[3] was generally excellent and most helpful apart from misleading statement that 'foreign powers are still in control of Indochina' which fortunately not printed in local press. It hoped that Ambassador Bowles may find appropriate opportunity make additional statement making clear that Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam are independent, sovereign states. Impressive recognition their independence was furnished by recent unanimous vote of non-Soviet members of Security Council (including Pakistan) for their admission into UN.[4]

"I suggest however that it might still be useful if Department would send to our diplomatic missions, particularly those in Asian countries, study or memorandum instruction addressed to clearing up widely held and sedulously propagated misconceptions that Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia are neither (*a*) juridically nor (*b*) in fact independent, sovereign states.

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[1] Drafted by Robert E. Hoey, Officer in Charge, Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs. Sent to Manila, Bangkok, Rangoon, Djakarta, Colombo, New Delhi, and Karachi; also sent for information to Saigon, Singapore, Moscow, London, and Paris.

[2] The file copy of telegram 652 is in file 751G.00/9–2452.

[3] The *New York Times* of Sept. 7 contained an interview with Chester Bowles, Ambassador in India, regarding the Ambassador's recently concluded tour of Southeast Asia.

[4] For information on the vote of the Security Council, Sept. 19, see editorial note, p. 254.

"As regards (*a*), provisions in basic accords looking toward harmonizing their foreign policy and foreign treaties with those of France do not, according to accepted international law (e.g. Hackworth *Digest International Law*, PP47 Seq.), impair status of three countries as fully independent states.

"Neither, with one possible exception, do the extensive preferences, privileges and safeguards conceded French Union interests and nationals in basic accords detract from juridical position of three countries as internally sovereign states.

"Possible exception to above statement is provision whereby cases involving non-Viet French Union citizens and (owing to as yet unabrogated treaty with Chinese Nationalist Government) Chinese nationals shall be tried by mixed French-Viet tribunals. Since French judges are appointed (with approval of chief of state) and paid by French Government, it may be argued that certain extra territorial rights exist. However French judges actually regarded by French as French representatives in French Union courts. French informed Cambodia (only one of three Associated States which has so far raised question) that they were ready to accord Cambodian nationals privilege of mixed courts in other parts of French Union if Cambodia desired. French defense of such privileges is that Associated States had no functioning judicial systems of own when full independence given and the new systems are not yet ready to assume full burden of disbursing justice particularly given the state of war and enemy terrorism. In Viet-Nam, mandarinal courts had been abolished. Further, neither Viet-Nam nor other states have yet completed own codes of law, and for many questions French laws still in force. This limited sharing of judicial powers also defended as temporary measure by argument international Communism aggression and cannot fulfill responsibility without some shared power to assure lawful order and security in regions behind battle lines. It is noteworthy that, in bills of complaint made by extreme Viet nationalists against French policy and influence, mixed courts are rarely mentioned.

"There is in addition the temporary circumstance that supreme military command in this war vested in French and that French command, in order meet its responsibilities, enjoys certain emergency limited powers in certain areas. Thus, port of Haiphong, principal military port, under French control. To assist in maintaining military security and public order behind battle lines, French security police still allowed function along with national security police systems of three states. French activities, however exercised in coordination and cooperation with security police of three governments. In general, it can be said that emergency limited and local authority of French High Command is comparable to that exercised by UN forces in Korea, is exercised with restraint and does not abate sovereignty of three countries.

"In brief, legal position of three countries as independent sovereign states cannot I believe be controverted.

"This remains fact that France by virtue of circumstance that it both defending and financing three governments, enjoys position of very great influence. Question arises whether by its influential position France does or can exercise super-sovereign powers in three countries."

Saigon telegram No. 652 (Section 2 of 2).

"In fact, during past year or more French have not attempted exert direct governing authority. They have limited their complaints and representations even where serious governmental errors of commission and omission have impaired military effort and administration for which France paying major cost. Thus, during last six months Huu's Premiership, inaction of regime, Huu's increasing antagonism to Letourneau, and his refusal to publish budget or increase tax revenues were harming military and political situation, and French might well then have felt justified in requesting Bao Dai dissolve or change government. Bao Dai, who wanted to get rid of Huu, would probably have complied instantly with direct request (doubt he is placing 'blame' for his action on French). Nevertheless, no such request made. Again, in case of Cambodia, where government sympathetic to Son Ngoc Thanh anti-French agitator and former collaborator of Japanese, was steadily fomenting rebellion and anti-French manifestations, French let matters proceed with no action other than mild remonstrance to King. As situation developed to point of endangering internal order, thus favoring guerrilla activities of Viet Minh Communist forces, French stepped up their remonstrances but only to point of warning King they could no longer be militarily responsible for defense and internal security of kingdom unless corrective action taken. King finally acted on own initiative to dissolve government and personally assumed premiership.

"Restraint shown by French in above circumstances noteworthy—and very wise.

"French representatives, particularly in matters affecting their financial and military responsibilities and sacrifices, bound to be given respectful consideration by responsible governments of three states. Any attempt, however, by France to force its will on three governments or to exert powers of internal government could not, in my opinion, succeed in view of nationalist feelings of both governments and the governed. French exert influence, but not governing authority.

"Apart from national aspirations for independence acting as brake to possible French intentions interference, there is fact of growing national armies. They are indeed at this stage of their development necessarily subject to French High Command, but already Viet national army consists of some 120,000 regulars, figure which compares with 138,000 first-line troops of Viet Minh, against which French Union forces, with increasing assistance of national armies, still making only slow progress.

"Apart from these facts, there is circumstance that US now supporting, if to lesser degree than France, development of governments and military forces of three states. Our policy is to protect and foster independence of three states. I recall about year and half ago Maréchal de Lattre, objecting to press references to him as French 'proconsul' remarked to me that he had come to perfect independence of states, adding 'even if France wished move back toward colonial authority, it would be unable to do so—US would not let us do it'. I believe that moral authority of US would be sufficient to thwart any misguided effort on part of France to resubject national will of these peoples and their governments to colonial control.

"Our sympathy with aspirations these peoples for independence implies no opposition to their remaining within French Union. As matter of fact, they have no other choice at present. Were it not for French Union forces, the three states would be in effect vassal members of Soviet Union.

"Whether, when peace comes, all or any of three states will desire to stay in French Union remains to be seen. It is hardly to be doubted that at that time there would be renegotiation of certain terms, of the extensive and, in Viet opinion, excessive privileges and concessions granted in basic accords and implementing conventions. French realization that basic accords cannot be considered as ironbound documents preserving French ascendancy and privilege in Associated States was shown in Letourneau's public admission in Washington last June that French Union was not prison, but a voluntary association of free states."

ACHESON

790.00/10–252: Telegram

The Ambassador in India (Bowles) to the Department of State

SECRET NEW DELHI, October 2, 1952—9 p. m.

1404. Rptd info London 70, Saigon 6. Nehru in long discussion yesterday asked me in detail about trip Southeast Asia. He particularly gratified my favorable report progress Burma. Most his questions dealt with Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and general situation Indochina.

He asked what I heard about activities Chinese Commies along the northern boundary, probable outcome fighting this fall and winter and the real intentions of the French as far as the future is concerned.

I emphasized all over again that he could be sure American people could never be induced to subsidize Fr colonialism in Asia or anywhere else and that we were helping Fr in Indochina for only one reason i.e. we felt this area strategic key to all Southeast Asia, that if a vacuum were allowed develop there Commie Chinese would be tempted follow Jap invasion route 41 and 42, that this would jeopardize all free Asia, including India and eventually undermine security Europe and our own country.

I stated that I understood his deep-rooted suspicions and agreed that minority French might like find some way maintain their hold indefinitely Indochina. However, I pointed out that in my sincere opinion this definitely not Fr majority view and that Letourneau had made this very clear following his visit to US. I stated Letourneau had personally reassured me on this point most emphatically and so had Vietnam PriMin Tam.

Nehru stated he did not feel Letourneau's statement US quite as precise as I described it and that if Fr were really earnest their desires basic solution Indochina they would make it absolutely clear that they fighting only for right Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to be independent states and lay blame continuation war on Viet Minh subservience foreign power (i.e. Chinese Commies).

He stated remained sceptical Fr motives even though he willing agree there must be many intelligent Frenchmen who saw issues as I had stated them.

I said even if we could assume defeat Viet Minh and the departure of Fr three countries would still be wobbly and potential vacuum. I expressed opinion under such circumstances UN guarantee of territorial integrity Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam would be essential to their survival view Commie pressures from north and asked if India would be willing join in an assurance this kind.

Nehru stated that this would depend on circumstances at time, but if Fr were really out and these three nations really free, India would be willing take positive position.

(Again let me say I realize many complicated problems we face Indochina and elsewhere which affect our relations with Fr. However, it seems to me, Nehru's point has considerable validity and only when people three Indochinese countries convinced Fr honestly intend get out are we likely see development of offensive dynamic spirit strong enough insure military victory.)

[Here follows discussion of other subjects.]

Bowles

751G.00/10–652 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL Saigon, October 6, 1952—3 p. m.

720. Rptd info Paris 144, Hanoi unn. Offroy, Dipl Counselor High Commissariat, informed Emb off Fr are concerned over possibility there emerging from Peiping Peace Conf[1] peace offensive which might include proposal for negot "peace settlement" in AS. Offroy states such a proposal wld pose embarrassing problems both in AS and in Fr in view considerable sentiment in latter country for relief from burdens entailed by France's milit and finan effort in IC. He felt that because of extensive propaganda build-up given Peiping Conf it would be psychological error for conf only to reiterate run of mill peace slogans and therefore almost incumbent on Commies to come up with spectacular proposal. Fr carefully watching for any indication such move on part Commies but Offroy implied Fr had not formulated plan on how to meet situation if it occurred.

Pres Tam last night also mentioned to me his concern over possibility Commie proposal for negots, said that it wld create considerable difficulty for his govt given wishful thinking prevailing in many quarters regarding practicability of negotiated settlement with VM.

Heath

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[1] The Asian and Pacific Region Peace Conference met at Peking from Oct. 2 to Oct. 13, with representatives of 37 nations and numerous unofficial observers in attendance. An "Appeal to the Peoples of the World," issued on Oct. 12, denounced the policies of the United States with respect to Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia; supported the views of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China; and called for peace throughout the East Asian area. For text, see Denise Folliot, ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1952*, Royal Institute of International Affairs (London, Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 466–469.

Editorial Note

A conference of Military Representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, New Zealand, and Australia met in Washington from October 6 to October 17, 1952, to consider the defense of Southeast Asia in the event of aggression by forces of the People's Republic of China. For the conclusions of the conference report, October 17, and related documentation, see volume XII.

123 Heath, Donald R.: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET   SAIGON, October 18, 1952—11 p. m.

815. Wirom 623, Sept 23[1] and Embtel 630, Sept 20.[2] Pres Tam asked me to see him last night and informed me that the Vietnamese security police had finally captured the principal agent ordered by the VM to assassinate me and had killed his assistant.

The VM originally set Oct 1 for the attempt but then postponed it until later in the month. The principal agent appeared in Saigon on Oct 10 and shadowed. On evening of Oct 11 was observed by plain-clothes detectives entering the Emb garden presumably for a preliminary reconnaissance since he left within a few minutes. The fol day he was arrested with a woman companion. On his person was found a rough sketch of the residence and garden and in his room a Sten machine gun, one VM made revolver and three grenades. He was wearing the uniform of a Fr Master Sergeant and had well-forged papers. According to Tam both arrestees confessed rather readily and revealed that an assistant lived in a nearby village and was expected to join them in Saigon. The assistant failing to appear a security police party went to his village, opened fire and killed him instantly. The fol day a sub-machine gun and six grenades, ammunition and VM documents were discovered in a hiding place revealed by the prisoners.

Tam showed me a copy of a proposed press release which did not name me but merely stated that the Vietnamese police had arrested two VM agents planning to assassinate an "important foreign personage". Today's Saigon press, however, gave fairly long story of the occurrence and named me as the object of the plot.

The security police believes that no other attempts on my life will be made in the near future but has suggested reinforcing the hedge around the residence with barbed wire and additional lighting of the garden at rear of the residence. In addition to the regular guard one plain-clothes man will be assigned to exercise surveillance.

From Tam's remarks, I fear that the male prisoner will be executed with only a drum-head trial, if any, within a few days.

HEATH

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[1] Not identified in Department of State files.

[2] In telegram 630 from Saigon, Sept. 20, not printed, Ambassador Heath reported that President Tam had warned him that the Viet Minh had organized a plot against his life. (123 Heath, Donald R.)

751G.00/10–2252 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, October 22, 1952—8 p. m.
PRIORITY

225. Dept pass Paris, DEPTAR G-2, ONI, AFOIN, sent priority Dept 225, repeated info Paris 116, Saigon 167. I had half hour interview my request this afternoon with Letourneau, following announcement here Fr Chamber calling for debate on Indochina and noon press briefing carried by wire services indicating abandonment wide area centered about Nghia-lo including relatively important post of An-yen; and general withdrawal to line on River Noire. Letourneau said he had advised Pinay he cannot consent to Indochina debate in his absence but that he is providing materials for statement to Chamber on Oct 24;[1] even this however, he considers annoying in midst of difficult campaign.

ResMin confirmed that Fr intelligence preceding attack was deficient and added that even now he has no clear idea of details. Some troops are known to have escaped from Nghia-lo and are making way back toward, but have not yet reached, Fr positions where they will be questioned. VM attack was delivered in strength of not less than two and probably three divs. Letourneau said he had no idea of eventual VM intent, which may be to overrun entire Thai country and perhaps penetrate to Laos; he added that thought had of course been given to possibility attack was designed to screen some movement from Chi border. In this connection, however, Pres of Thai Federation at Laichau yesterday informed ResMin his own agents reported nothing at all toward the north. Letourneau gave clear impression that delta defense wld not be weakened to undertake adventures in fantastically difficult country, of which he showed me recent photos, containing peaks of from two to three thousand meters and penetrated only by rough trails.

Until today weather has been nearly impossible for aviation, but clear skies now permit what ResMin described as "marvelous work". Possibility of air operation has brightened picture, which Letourneau said "was yesterday very gloomy".

Para battalion dropped last week at Tu-Le has advanced to meet another dropped yesterday along trails toward Son-La to reinforce it; two units have now joined and shld make their way to region of Son-La by tomorrow. Letourneau said this was great relief, for it was earlier feared they might have lost battalion at Tu-Le.

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[1] On Oct. 24, René Pleven, the French Minister of Defense, delivered a statement before the National Assembly minimizing the significance of the fall of Nghia-Lô. For text, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1952, Débats*, pp. 4391–4392.

ResMin said skill and resources shown by VM troops operating in mountainous area has provoked wonder among his own generals. He says this phase of campaign may very well last one month, although it is taking VM very far from own bases and into generally hostile country. Letourneau said he will stay here until October 28 when he goes Phnom Penh for King's anniversary. He plans then return Saigon to meet Defense Under Secy Foster.[2] ResMin expressed particular regret that circumstances had prevented Asst Secy Allison from visiting Hanoi.[3]

STURM

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[2] William C. Foster, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Frank C. Nash, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, arrived at Saigon on Oct. 29 for several days of conferences. Adm. Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific, and U.S. Pacific Fleet, also visited Indochina in late October, arriving on Oct. 28.

[3] John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, visited Indochina during the course of a tour of Far Eastern nations, Sept. 26–Nov. 16.

751G.00/10–2352 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, October 23, 1952—10 a. m.

226. Dept pass Paris, Saigon; rptd info Paris 117, Saigon 178. Prime Minister Tam yesterday evening in interview with C. Tyler Wood, Deputy Associate Director MSA,[1] expressed opinion in reply direct question that VM rebellion can be put down within two years. Asked to state his reasons for this view, Tam said that military cadres developed painfully by General Vo-Nguyen-Giap over years 1946 through 1949 have been largely dissipated by successive military operations and replaced only by raw recruits; he added that VM food supply problem is becoming progressively acute, suggestion that means to solve it can probably not be found. Questioned with regard to Chinese Commie aid to VM as a factor tending to prolong state of war, Tam answered that US aid to Vietnam more than outweighs whatever advantage VM derive from Chinese Commie material support.

Wood asked Tam if Vietnam wld be willing accept services of US advisers in technical and financial fields. Prime Minister replied that for time being this question is delicate, but that when Vietnamese independence has been more firmly established the country will welcome not only US advisers, but capital as well.

At dinner offered by Governor Binh last evening, Tam told me that because of disastrous effect of typhoon in south, especially at Phanthiet, he was obliged cancel plans fly over area of operations in northwest today in order return Saigon this morning. Prime Minister brief stay in Hanoi was limited principally to discussion of measures now being put in effect, with fair degree of success, to lower price of rice. Although he conferred with Letourneau, Tam did not witness any part of military operation in progress.

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[1] Wood and Theodore Tannenwald, Jr., Assistant Director and Chief of Staff, Office of the Director for Mutual Security, were on visit in Indochina.

STURM

751G.00/10-2452

Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson) to the Under Secretary of State (Bruce)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] October 24, 1952.

Subject: Military Developments in Tonkin

The attached map[1] shows the present order of battle of both anti-Communist and Communist (Viet Minh) forces in Tonkin. The fortified perimeter surrounding Hanoi–Haiphong has not been seriously attacked and appears secure for the moment.

The French Union Forces maintained garrisons at Nghia-Lo (100 miles northwest of Hanoi) and at Lai Chau (200 miles northwest of Hanoi). In addition, there were many small intelligence patrols of Thai tribesmen, accompanied by a few French soldiers with radio sets, operating in the areas on both the north and south banks of the Red River. These patrols furnished useful information concerning Communist movements.

During the week of October 13–18, Viet Minh forces in large numbers overran several of the small intelligence patrols, who withdrew to more protected areas and continue to provide information by radio. The garrison of approximately 1,000 men (including 100 French) at Nghia-Lo was attacked on October 16–17 by overwhelming Communist troops. Although reinforced by one paratroop battalion from inside the Hanoi perimeter, the post was lost and the number of survivors is unknown. Lai Chau has not been attacked.

The French have flown six to nine battalions of infantry and one battery of artillery from inside the perimeter to the area Son La-Moc Chau where they have taken up position on the south bank of the Black River. Viet Minh troops are advancing in that direction, but no contact has been reported.

For the time being the Franco-Viet-Nam forces have lost a useful listening post at Nghia-Lo. It could be retaken, but only by utilizing troops needed to hold the Hanoi perimeter. There are few if any troops in the South or Center who could be spared from present duties to reinforce Tonkin. If, however, the Viet Minh attacked the perimeter, it is presumed that General Salan would accept a calculated risk and denude an area in the South or Center to stiffen the North.

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[1] Not reproduced.

Out of the confused situation we can draw the following conclusions:

1. The Viet Minh can take any territory in Tonkin except the Hanoi–Haiphong perimeter.
2. Although they cannot take Hanoi, they could breach a point in the perimeter and last for a few days before being ejected.
3. We do not believe that the loss of Nghia-Lo should affect the present ability of the French Union Forces to maintain the perimeter. Troops moved outside that area to counter other Viet Minh movements would, of course, weaken the perimeter defenses. We do not know to what degree the French may have already stripped the perimeter defenses to establish and maintain the Son La strong point.
4. The present identified strength of Viet Minh units moving southwest following Nghia-Lo battle, is approximately 20,000, while the French Union Forces facing the enemy in that area number approximately 10,000 (French Army estimate). There are approximately 15,000 Viet Minh troops, belonging to the same divisions which attacked Nghia-Lo, whose present whereabouts is unreported.
5. If the present operation is designed to screen a Chinese Communist attack, there is no information to indicate that there has been a build-up in South China or any suspicious movement inside northern Tonkin adjacent to the China border. French Air reconnaissance continues to cover the latter area.

751G.5/10–2852 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, October 28, 1952—7:45 p. m.

888. For Ambassador. US press has carried wide coverage Nghia-Lo battle and subsequent developments Tonkin campaign. Dept under constant pressure from official agencies to interpret meaning, importance and probable outcome campaign.

Presume additional mil info expected from att as result direct inquiries by Army will satisfy some or all above requirements.

Although Nghia-Lo area does not appear to have immed strategic importance; forces engaged, including Fr paratroop reserves are important, if current reports are correct.

What we shld like to have from Salan or Letourneau is estimate of effect of current engagement on projected offensive operations for which we have supplied transport aircraft. We need not have Fr operational plans in detail but wld like know if projected assumption initiative has been endangered, deferred, diverted or abandoned since Nghia-Lo.

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[1] Drafted by Robert E. Hoey and Edmund A. Gullion of PSA.

To what extent did recent typhoons damage aircraft on ground or affect readiness.

BRUCE

751G.5/10–3152 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, October 31, 1952—11 a. m.

912. Rptd info Paris 161. No distribution outside Department. As Letourneau and Salan are presently in NVN I addressed questions raised in Deptel 888, Oct 28 to General Allard, Salan's chief staff. Allard stated that VM offensive had not endangered or deferred projected airdrop operation; if anything, it may advance date operation. Typhoon damaged eleven transport planes but all expected be made operational in 15 days. Help being recd from MAAG which getting spare parts from Philippines highly appreciated.

Allard stated friends have launched offensive operation. One Group Mobile of three battalions have already crossed Black River with objective of threatening from rear VM line communication. He indicated French now have measure of VM offensive in that country and are taking measures cope with it.

Extensive press publicity abroad given VM offensive has tended impart to operation importance not shared by consensus informed opinion here. While any French Union reverse is always unfortunate and gives considerable psychological advantage to enemy, regarded of secondary strategic importance and its loss is not believed to constitute serious threat to French military position in NVN. French HICOM is not particularly worried.

HEATH

751G.00/11–652 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, November 6, 1952—9 a. m.

941. Rptd info Paris 164, Hanoi unnumbered. Had long talk with Letourneau yesterday evening and found him unusually preoccupied, almost to the point of discouragement, with the difficulties of (*a*) getting Bao Dai to display the activity and set the example which the internal political situation demands, of (*b*) getting the Indochinese budget through the Fr Assembly and of (*c*) overcoming increasing

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in three parts.

Fr opposition and defeatism with respect to the Fr effort in IC. With respect to (*a*), he said that his day had started with a surprise visit from Gaio and Gov Binh of North Vietnam who had asked him point-blank if he favored them and wld request Bao Dai to retain them in the govt. Letourneau had answered he liked them personally but that he cld not intervene in internal politics and polit appointments. Letourneau said that Binh had not been too bad a Governor of Tonkin but that there was now positive proof and wide knowledge of graft in his administration. When he, Letourneau, had visited Hanoi he had talked with (unnamed) leading "fence sitters". Previously these men had told him they wld refuse to enter any govt until the Fr released their control of IC. Now the same men said that was no longer the obstacle; they realized the necessity of Fr "presence" at this time. They wld not, however, enter the govt or line up with Bao Dai until the regime was purged of its graft and corruption. Letourneau said that it was notorious that in the north appointments to such positions as Chief of Province were now being sold. Whether the money went into Gov Binh's pocket or the pockets of his immediate entourage was immaterial. Letourneau felt that the replacement of Binh by Tri wld be a great step forward since Tri was essentialy honest man although not, Letourneau said, "as honest as you are and I try to be". Tri had been out of office for a year and a quarter but nevertheless had been able to make two trips to France and purchase a new house. I cld not have done that, Letourneau said, out of the savings from official salary. He was afraid, however, that Bao Dai wld not accept Tri. He was not sure of Bao Dai's present attitude toward Tri and there was also the circumstance that Binh was one of Bao Dai's favorites.

Letourneau cld not go to Bao Dai and accuse Binh of grafting. Bao Dai might as a result of such complaint remove Binh from office but he wld tell Binh his dismissal was the result of Fr request and France wld have another enemy. In spite of his grafting, Binh was not a bad element. What was needed was not to drive Binh or others out of polit life but for Bao Dai to exert his authority to compel Binh and other office-holders to be honest. It wld be tremendously difficult to instill habits of official honesty in Vietnam. Letourneau had recently complained to Tam for having appointed a man of known dishonesty and Tam had replied sadly that it was impossible to appoint a completely honest Governor in Vietnam. Most Vietnamese looked to public office as a legitimate opportunity for private enrichment. Nevertheless, Letourneau said, in spite of tradition, honest administration must be enforced in Vietnam. In his first talk with Bao Dai, he wld insist most strongly on this point. Whatever crimes and defects the VM might have, VM admin was honest and only an honest govt cld prevail against the VM. One thing that Bao Dai shld do is to abolish legalized gambling in Saigon. While in France Letourneau had urged Bao Dai to take this step but the latter had refused to discuss the matter.

Letourneau said that my estimate of Bao Dai's "cost" of the gambling concession of two to two and a half million piastres per month was too low. His Majesty was getting a good four million piastres ($800,000 a par of exchange) a month as his rake-off from Cholon gambling. To my inquiry whether Tam had succeeded to ex-Premier Huu's rake-off from the gambling concession Letourneau said he supposed so but that he hoped and believed that Tam was not putting it into his pocket but was adding it to the Govt's political fund. Letourneau said that he was persuaded of Tam's general honesty and good intentions although fact that Tam still kept as his mistress Le Thi Gioi, locally reputed to be the queen of the black market, was a disturbing circumstance. I remarked that this week's "fireside radio chat" of Tam had stressed the necessity of official honesty.

Letourneau said that, income-wise, Bao Dai must be "about the wealthiest man in the world" since he received 90,000,000 piastres or roughly $4.5 million a year from the Govt, (*Note:* this payment is not shown in recently published Vietnamese budget) to which must be added his rake-off from gambling.

Letourneau remarked he felt very badly about both the action and inaction of Bao Dai. He liked Bao Dai who had many amiable qualities and undoubted intelligence. In the beginning "the only solution was the Bao Dai solution" and that was still true. The north and center still remained fundamentally monarchist. The monarchy was the only institution which cld hold this deeply divided country together but monarchical sentiment was diminishing rapidly because of Bao Dai's poor performance and example. Cochin China was of course Republican in sentiment and wld welcome the abolition of the monarchy but the north wld never stand for a Republic headed by a southerner anymore than Cochin China wld stand for a Republic headed by a northerner. If Bao Dai wld bring back the Empress, who was a Cochin Chinese, he wld also have influence and support in the south. Letourneau intended to express to Bao Dai his deep disappointment that the Empress had not returned. The Empress had promised the Crown Prince if he passed his baccalaureate examinations he cld spend his autumn school vacation in Vietnam which the boy was eager to do. The young Prince was intelligent—he had only failed by two points to obtain honorable mention in the baccalaureate examination—and was patriotic. He shld eventually make a good ruler. Letourneau said he wld also tell Bao Dai that he must immediately make a trip to the north to visit the sector now controlled by the Vietnamese national forces and commanded entirely by Vietnamese officers. Bao Dai shld also visit Phan-Thietcoo destroyed by the typhoon. If Bao Dai wld spend one week a month in official visits, public appearances and presiding occasional Cabinet meetings, the polit situation wld improve immediately. Letourneau was, however, dubious he wld be able to persuade him to even that much public activity. It was unfortunate that Bao Dai's chief of Cabinet, Nguyen De, was such a weak character. He was completely dominated by Bao Dai. What was needed was a man who wld stand up to Bao Dai and Letourneau was now persuaded that Bao Dai respected and wld heed strong opposition.

Letourneau said he was seriously preoccupied with the increased opposition in the Fr Assembly to the continuance of the Fr effort in IC and he was not certain that he wld be able to obtain necessary budget. Daladier's[2] consistent opposition to the Fr milit effort in Southeast Asia was not important, but Faure's joining the opposition was important since he enjoyed great influence among the younger members of the radical party. He hoped that his own party, and Pleven, wld hold firm but there was no denying the fact that the thesis that Fr shld forget Asia and concentrate wholly on its position in Africa was gaining ground. I interrupted to assert that if France lost out here, she might be unable to maintain her position in Morocco or Tunisia. Letourneau said emphatically that was of course absolutely true. The solution of the Tunisian and Moroccan problems cld only be achieved after Fr success in IC. He was confident of eventual Fr milit and polit victory in IC. He only wished that Salan cld produce a victory in time for the budgetary discussions.

He had told Salan that he wld never ask him to undertake any mil operation timed and designed purely to affect sentiment in metropolitan France. He had said to Salan, however, that it wld be most fortunate if some victory cld be achieved at this time. Letourneau agreed with me that it was unlikely that this wld happen. The Fr had pushed on to Phu Tho and had encountered no Vietminh troops. Obviously the VM were avoiding and wld probably be able to avoid battle at this precise time.

He feared that within his own party he wld meet the suggestion that an effort be made to effect some armistice arrangement with the VM. That any effort to reach a peaceable compromise with the VM wld be successful was inconceivable. If he were instructed to attempt such an arrangement he wld resign.

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[2] Edouard Daladier, member of the National Assembly; Premier of France in 1933, 1934, and 1938–1940.

I inquired whether if I made some press statement or speech here asserting my entire conviction of the ultimate mil success of the Franco-In forces that wld help him in his efforts to maintain present Fr policy in IC. He said that it wld be decidedly helpful. I told him I wld think over the matter and let him know in a few days. Will the Dept please instruct. One difficulty wld be to find a suitable date and forum. There are no holidays between Armistice Day which wld be too soon and Thanksgiving Day which wld be too late.[3]

HEATH

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[3] In telegram 1059 from Saigon, Nov. 22, Ambassador Heath reported that Letourneau had not raised again the question of the proposed statement. Heath no longer planned to make the statement unless the Minister experienced unexpected difficulties. (751G.00/11-2252)

751G.11/11-752 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, November 7, 1952—9 p. m.

964. Rptd info Paris unn, Hanoi unn. Bao Dai recd me yesterday. Regretting that his busy program (he left early this morning) wld prevent thorough discussion of situation with me, he asked me to come to Ban Me Thuot in few days for longer talks. He thanked me for prompt MSA aid to typhoon victims at Phan Thiet which he wld visit shortly as well as Viet mil sector in Tonkin. He wld celebrate his 40th birthday very quietly. He had directed that credits set up for natl observance his anniversary be given to typhoon sufferers. There wld be no birthday ceremonies and simple letter of good wishes from me as Dean of Dipl Corps was all that was expected.

1. He had been most pleased by his reception in France, extremely impressed by Pinay and kindly recd by Auriol. He wanted know whether I had seen Letourneau fol latter's call. (Had no opportunity to learn what transpired during Letourneau–Bao Dai mtg since former left Saigon early this a. m.) Bao Dai went on say while he found understanding and support in all sectors of Fr Govt from Auriol down, he was having difficulties with High Comm. Fact of matter was Letourneau did not like him. I observed that I had heard no indication of Letourneau's disliking him. Bao Dai went on say there was great dissatisfaction among all Fr polit parties over Letourneau's acting as High Comm while retaining the Min of Assoc States. Bao Dai thought by end of year Letourneau wld have to drop his High Commissionership. Bao Dai remarked he had nothing personally against Letourneau and had in fact supported latter on various occasions.

2. In answer to my inquiry, Bao Dai stated Empress in excellent health and was very anxious in near future to travel incognito to US. He asked me what I thought of project, I replied that I personally thought it might be interesting for her but wld ascertain my govt's reactions or suggestions. Empress he said had long wanted to visit States and while she wld travel incognito she might have some useful conversations with various people. As a girl she had spoken English fairly well but was rather out of practice. She wld be accompanied by niece.

Note: Dept pls instruct as to statements to be made re proposed visit.

3. Bao Dai's visit to France had by no means been rest cure since he had seen great many people. Univ of Montpellier, however, had at last found cause of his eye trouble and physical debility diagnosing liver flukes. He wld have to undergo rather rigorous treatment here for several months. He planned return France briefly in four or five months for medical observation and final check-up.

4. He had been much pleased with development of Crown Prince who was really first class student and seriously interested in affairs of his country.

5. Immed on his return he had been confronted with problem of relations between Pres Tam and Giao and Binh. He had refused to make decision until he had had chance to investigate matter.

6. He was not at all satisfied with program of building up Viet Army. At start, it had been thought necessary to pay Viet soldiers on same scale as French. This was utterly beyond financial abilities of Vietnam over any extended period and, in effect, considering Viet standards, soldiers were overpaid. Army as it now stood was luxury. There wld be resistance, of course, to lowering pay scales but he felt sure that mil wld accept cut. Because of high pay and also because of lack of officers and non-coms, there had been no net increase in Franco-Viet Forces. To be sure, Fr Union Forces had turned over to natl army large number of battalions previously directly paid by French, but of regular 40 Viet battalions only one and one-half battalions were new additional units. He wld ask Fr to accept larger number of Viet officers for year's training in France, but for considerable time to come it wld be necessary for Fr provide officers and non-coms for bulk of Viet Forces. He suggested that Viet battalion units were too light-staffed in accordance with European standards but in excess of local requirements. It wld be sufficient to have one company officer and few non-coms for most Viet companies.

HEATH

740.5/11-1052: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, November 10, 1952—7 p. m.

2870. Re Deptel 2609, Nov 4.[1]

1. We have considered with great interest the possible line of approach outlined in reftel, and we fully appreciate the desirability of having others participate in assisting France in financing the Indo-Chinese operations. We assume that reftel concerned with aid that would only alleviate strain on French budgetary resources, and that manpower assistance not considered in this context. It is the budgetary strain which deeply affects French thinking in NATO, EDC, Germany and defense questions in general. They would equally welcome any prospect of relieving drain on Friday [*French*] military manpower but at present time seem to expect such relief only from "settlement of Indochina war" or eventual development of Associated States Natl Armies, as they apparently see any military participation by other countries, in absence of overt Chinese intervention, as highly unlikely and perhaps undesirable.

2. French have long been anxious for internatl recognition that they are defending Indochina in interest of free world rather than merely waging a colonial war. You will recall that during Secretary's discussion with French ministers last May, Pinay's first question was whether US did in fact recognize Fr effort in Indochina as in general allied interest rather than purely Fr interest and that Secy replied in affirmative.

In recent weeks there has been increasing public discussion of this situation and increasingly frequent statements that Fr could not continue indefinitely to carry by herself the burden of a war in which her natl interest was less of a controlling factor than of preventing the spread of Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

3. It seems to us that pre-condition for obtaining even symbolical aid from other countries is establishment of pol framework for associating them with Fr effort. Fr may have had this in mind when they suggested Southeast Asia problem be discussed tripartitely in Dec. Should Fr themselves bring up in immediate future question of possible approach to other countries, we believe we should refer to Secty's reply to Pinay last May, reiterate our belief Indochina campaign of interest to free world rather than solely to France, state that we sup-

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[1] In telegram 2609 to Paris, Nov. 4, the Department of State discussed the possibility of obtaining the financial support of members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the French effort in Indochina. It was considered that initial efforts might best be made with Canada and Belgium. The Department emphasized the favorable effect upon Congress which could be achieved by an attempt to reduce the burden of the Indochina war for the United States. (740.5/11-552) For the complete text of telegram 2609, see volume VI.

port in principle the idea of obtaining and organizing additional assistance from other nations, and that we would be prepared to support such Fr proposals to this end as might be practicable and desirable.

4. On other hand, any initiative by us at present might well, in current state of Fr thinking, arouse strong suspicion we merely seeking ways of reducing our own assistance. This might have seriously discouraging effect on their own determination with respect to Indochina. Accordingly I hope no steps will be taken with Fr at this time along lines reftel, and fact that we are even considering subject should be most closely held.

DUNN

611.51/11-1352: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, November 13, 1952—6 p. m.

989. Rptd info Paris 166. Re Deptel 954 to Saigon Nov 6.[1] We concur with the recommendations contained in Paris tel 2729 November 3 to Dept.[2]

With specific ref to topic US aid and Indochina, we believe that it wld be in best interest US to grant $125 million "difference" which Fr has requested which, conditional on favorable Congressional action (which was not forthcoming), was promised Letourneau last June in Wash. We are concerned over weariness large segment Fr with IC effort and possibility that short fall in US aid might be seized only by Fr as excuse reduce effort in IC. It is of utmost importance to US that Fr financial and military contribution to IC war not be reduced.

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[1] In telegram 954 to Saigon, Nov. 6, the Department of State repeated the text of telegram 2729 from Paris, Nov. 3, which is printed in part in footnote 2 below. (611.51/11-352)

[2] In telegram 2729 from Paris, Nov. 3, Ambassador Dunn addressed himself to various aspects of United States relations with France. The section on Indochina read as follows:

"US aid—Indochina. For present fiscal year the maximum (in addition to end-item aid and normal OSP) that Fr have any reason to hope for is $650 mil. Rightly or wrongly, Fr public opinion has been conditioned to this figure as fair and equitable US contrib to Fr mil budget for Metropole and Indochina and as figure US had led Fr Govt to expect. Fr public opinion has also been informed that, with this assistance from US, Fr can develop mil program which will enable achievement of 1953 objectives in Fr NATO build-up and Indochina operations. Again rightly or wrongly, if $650 mil is not made available during course of annual review the 'shortfall' in US aid will continue, in Fr public opinion, to be cause of any failure of Fr to meet not only mil targets but essential civilian requirements. By granting differential between 525 and 650 and accepting Fr link to Indochina we gain out of all proportion to sum involved. Concurrently, of course, we shld undertake continuous judicious release of pertinent statistics and related info to disabuse Fr Parl and public of widespread picture of Fr alone bearing full Indochina burden. Substance of long-term Indochina problem is too vast to be tackled now." (611.51/11-352) For the complete text, see volume VI.

Comparing magnitude and importance of fighting in IC with that of Korea, where our expenditures are tremendously greater, it is evident that the war here is too important to US for us to quibble over sum involved.

It is suggested that in order that the greatest possible psychological impact be made on Fr public opinion, Eisenhower [3] might at a suitable early opportunity—for example fol a foreign policy conf with the present admin—issue a statement to effect that question of additional funds for Fr was being actively and sympathetically explored.

HEATH

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[3] Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected President of the United States on Nov. 4, 1952.

751G.00/11–1352 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State [1]

SECRET SAIGON, November 13, 1952—6 p. m.

990. Rptd Paris unn, Hanoi unn.

1. I had a long talk with Pres Tam yesterday who seemed in good spirits and optimistic. He told me Governor Binh had resigned and wld shortly be replaced by Tri, former Governor of Tonkin. I remarked Bao Dai told me he wld have to investigate whether he wld take action with respect to Binh, but Tam said he had informed His Majesty that proof of large-scale graft was so certain that Binh had to go. Tam regretted that Binh, who has certain good qualities, had been so stupid and venal, remarking that the latter's practice of maintaining several households was an expensive one. Tam did not say what action wld be taken about Giao, but I heard last night from Gautier that Giao's dismissal is scheduled for the end of the month when Tam returns from the mtg of High Council of the Fr Union. First Secy Emb happened to meet Giao last evening. Giao indulged in usual diatribe against Tam and his govt, but for the first time (to my knowledge) also severely criticized Bao Dai. Heretofore, Giao has made a great parade of absolute loyality to Bao Dai.

Comment: Binh's replacement by Tri and the departure of the disruptive Giao will undoubtedly strengthen Tam's reputation and admin.

2. I bore down heavily on the absolute necessity of governmental honesty if any headway were to be made against VM propaganda and example. Tam asserted that he entirely shared this view and observed that for 6 years he had fought against the legalized gambling concession in Cholon. He was the only member, he asserted, of Huu's

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

Govt who was in favor of outlawing gambling which inevitably brought corruption in its train.

3. On a par, he said, with honest admin was the necessity of govt economy. He agreed with my observation that the example must be set from the top (Bao Dai). He was unable to exhort Bao Dai directly, but had observed very strongly to someone whom he knew wld repeat the statement to Bao Dai (presumably Nguyen De) that every time His Majesty indulged extravagant expenditure it was necessary for him to compensate by reducing legitimate and needed govt expenditures. Tam went on to say that he liked Bao Dai, but he also pitied him. Bao Dai was certainly a "morally unhappy man". His hunting and fishing expeditions were an attempt to forget the "moral distress" he must feel over his way of life. He, Tam, intended to try to "help" Bao Dai to assume his responsibilities and to straighten out his existence.

4. Tam said he was really worried over the possibility that the Fr might reduce the subsidies for the formation and maintenance of the Viet Natl Army, amounting, for 1952, to 3 billion piastres ($150 million). I remarked that Bao Dai had commented to me on the excessive pay scale of the Viet Army and that I personally thought it was in excess of natl financial capacity. Tam said he agreed heartily. In the long run it wld be neither possible nor good for the troops to be paid above then natl level of per capita income. The only remedy was compulsory milit service. It was possible that the present program of building a Vietnamese regular army along European lines was perhaps not the most suitable system. What was needed of course was to get more troops in the field against the VM. The lack of "cadres" was a limiting factor which perhaps cld be overcome in part by reducing the nbr of officers and non-coms in Viet units. Tam not as yet ready to take up with the Fr High Command the question of possibly changing the program for the development of the Vietnamese natl army.

5. Tam protested my observation that his agrarian reform seemed to be slowing up. He said that within last few months a total of 30,000 hectares (roughly 70,000 acres) had been sold by landlords to former tenants. A good many tenants had not paid their rent during the last year and had thereby saved enough money to make the initial payment on their farms. He had to go fairly slowly with the reform so as not to provoke organized opposition of large Fr and Viet landlords and landholders corporations. He was also deferring the inauguration of his Agric Credit Bank until he cld liquidate the old Credit Populaire. The latter institution had been formed to help small landowners but in practice had loaned mainly to the big landholders at a rate of 4 percent. The big proprietors had then re-loaned bank ad-

vances to their tenants at a rate which frequently reached 20 percent a month. He wld purchase the properties and equipment of the Credit Populaire for the new Agri Bank he was founding.

6. Tam insisted that he was moving steadily ahead with the project of an elective Natl Assembly. Village Council elections were already occurring and the Village Councils wld in turn elect representatives to the Provincial Assembly which in turn wld send a representative to the Natl body. Coincidently or shortly afterwards he hoped to have city elections. Each city wld be divided into wards. Thus, Saigon–Cholon wld have eight wards and eight representatives in the Natl Assembly. He thought very likely he wld be able to complete the elections in Jan next.

HEATH

751G.5 MSP/11-1352 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, November 13, 1952—2 p. m.

983. Following are joint comments MAAG, STEM, Embassy, on numbered paragraphs of Deptel 2609 to Paris November 4, repeated Saigon 949.[1]

1. It is to be noted that for IC it is likely that the FY 54 MDAP program will be less than the FY 53 program of $191 million which was less than the FY 52 program exceeding $20 million. In addition there will be a milit support program forecast at $35 million for FY 54 as compared with $30.5 million for FY 53. Econ aid is being tentatively programmed at $30 million for FY 54 compared with $25 million for FY 53. The milit estimates may be revised upward if the French increase the recruiting rate of milit forces of 3 Associated States. It is to be noted that the present Fr program for FY 53 adds only 10,000 troops to the Franco-Viet forces now combating with Viet Minh. Ideally, more troops should be put in the field against the Viet Minh if war is to be shortened. A limiting factor has been the inability of the Fr to provide officers and non-coms or to accelerate the selection and training of Viet officers.

2. We believe it desirable from all points of view that other western bloc powers contribute money or goods to the Fr-Associated States effort in IC. Such contributions could be made directly to the Associated States, of course with the approval and control of the Fr High Command. It is suggested that the contributions be financial to defray the maintenance of the increasing natl armies.

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[1] The telegram under reference is described in footnote 1, p. 278.

3. We agree that it is important not to solicit contributions at least at the start, from colonial powers with interests in the Far East, like the Dutch. It is further suggested that Australia and New Zealand may be willing to contribute, since New Zealand has already indicated interest in supporting war effort in Associated States by contribution of arms (see Deptel 598 Sept 19).[2]

4. As regards nature of Canadian contribution, it is to be recalled that certain items currently used in MDAP program are manufactured in Canada. We think it better for Canadian and Belgian contributions to be in cash since financing maintenance of the increasing national armies is greater problem than that of finding equipment which is now being furnished by MDAP and Fr.

5. We agree with statements in para 5.[3]

In regard to our suggestion contributions be in cash, it would seem that Congressional objections to deficit financing could not apply to countries like Fr and the Associated States which are engaged in a shooting war vs Communism. Fr is financing a large share of the cost of the Associated States armies by direct cash grants and according to the Lisbon experts is not in a position to increase the Fr milit budget at this time.

Fr and the US who are paying the lion's share of the cost of milit operations here should insist on higher tax rates and collections and govt economies by the AS. But with all the pressure we can muster and assuming the most earnest effort by the AS Govts it is unlikely that these states can, within the next year, develop local revenues or effect sufficient administrative economies to the point of defraying, without outside help, any large increase in the milit effort.

HEATH

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[2] In telegram 598 to Saigon, Sept. 19, the Department of State discussed aspects of a transfer of small arms and ammunition by New Zealand to France for use in Indochina. (751G.5614/9-1952)

[3] In paragraph 5 of the reference telegram, the Department of State stated that any initiative in this area would have to be taken by France; that the present seemed an inopportune time to explore the subject; and that it was soliciting views of Paris, Brussels, and Ottawa so that it would be possible to move promptly if the situation so dictated. (740.5/11-552)

Editorial Note

By letter of November 16, 1952, General Alfred M. Gruenther, Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe, relayed a message from French Defense Minister René Pleven to President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower in New York, stating that the French Government desired to invite the latter to include a visit to Indochina in his projected trip to Korea. General Gruenther made no recommendation regarding the proposal, but transmitted with his letter a memorandum of the conversation which he had had with Pleven on November 15, and a memorandum on the subject (dated November 16) by Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Embassy in France. MacArthur pointed out that a visit by Eisenhower to Indochina would have a beneficial effect on French public and Parliamentary opinion. On the other hand, he contended that such a visit could be misinterpreted as an indication of a decision by Eisenhower to provide extensive additional aid for Indochina. Also, it could have an unfavorable influence on those European elements which already believed that the United States was preoccupied with the Far East.

The Gruenther letter and its enclosures are in the papers of John Foster Dulles, Classified Material folder, at the Eisenhower Library. No reply has been found. General Eisenhower did not extend his trip to Korea to include Indochina.

751G.00/11–1852 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State [1]

SECRET SAIGON, November 18, 1952—6 p. m.

1028. Rptd info Paris unn, Hanoi unn. At Bao Dai's request I flew to Ban Me Thuot yesterday.

1. Nguyen De, Bao Dai's delegate, saw me first and, obviously acting under instructions, expressed resentment at Letourneau's observations to Bao Dai concerning the active leadership and mil tours of the King of Cambodia. I take it there was at least an insinuation on Letourneau's part that Bao Dai shld imitate his royal neighbor's activity. Nguyen De went into a long explanation of Vietnamese attitudes towards such royal performances. Said Vietnamese had a keen intelligence and wld see through any theatrically-arranged mil campaign appearances such as the Camb King was making. Such acts did not meet their traditional canons of royal deportment. Bao Dai wld lose face thereby. Bao Dai's value was that of being a "symbol" and he must not impair that role by unconvincing public tours and occasional graspings of the reins of govt. Anyway, he, Nguyen De, had heard that Camb "intellectuals" were very critical of their King's activities.

I replied I was willing to concede that conditions might be different in Vietnam, but that I felt certain that the King of Camb was doing the right thing in assuming active leadership in view of the troubled conditions that had developed in his country, that he was being successful, and his public appearances were appreciated by his subjects. I took little stock in any criticisms of unnamed Camb "intellectuals".

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

If those intellectuals were members of the preceding govt which the King had been obliged to dissolve, their criticisms had little standing for that govt had brought conditions in Camb to a very sorry pass. I remarked that one result of King Norodom's present campaign was an increase in self-confidence and interest in his country's problems. I also remarked that I had understood Bao Dai's visit to the Phanthiet typhoon area had been very well received by the people. Nguyen De agreed and said that the people particularly liked Bao Dai's touring around informally in a jeep and his personally passing out decorations and relief to the typhoon sufferers.

When I saw Bao Dai, he also brought up the question of comparison of his performance with that of the King of Cambodia, which had apparently been not too subtly drawn by Letourneau and which evidently rankled. I talked to Bao Dai in exactly the same language I had used with Nguyen De. Evidently to show me that he was mindful of his responsibilities, Bao Dai told me that he wld visit in the next few days the typhoon area of Bienhoa near Saigon and that he wld shortly visit the Vietnamese sector of the Tonkin front. He added that he wld be quite prepared to make a prolonged stay in Tonkin and actually direct and encourage the effort there if the Vietnamese army were given full responsibility for the protection of the delta.

Comment: I think that Letourneau was well advised to cite the Camb King's activity to Bao Dai, but I am not too sanguine that it will have immediate effect in stirring Bao Dai to greater activity.

2. Bao Dai said he had received De Chevigne, Secy of State for Fr Def Min, who had told him that Vietnam cld not count on present scale of Fr mil support beyond 1953. I said I hoped De Chevigne was wrong, that I thought it wld be very bad for the long-term interest and standing of France if there were any substantial withdrawal of Fr support and troops, as long as the battle against the Viet Minh was not won and the Chinese Communist menace remained. It wld not be possible for us to replace Fr troops and no matter what progress was made in developing Vietnamese National Army, it cld not, in the early future, hope to cope with a full-scale Chinese invasion.

Bao Dai then said that he would shortly discuss with Salan and the Fr the necessity of both increasing the size of the Viet Army and effecting economies by reducing present excessive pay scales. To make any real progress in pacification, the present schedule shld be revised to permit the addition of from 25 to 30 more Vietnamese battalions. The extra cost of this wld have to be borne by France, but it wld be an economy since it wld shorten the war and the term of necessary Fr support. I said that I agreed heartily that there shld be an increased force actually in the field against the Viet Minh. I disagreed, however, that France or others must bear all the additional cost. I was certain that by good administration and by economies throughout the govt, Vietnam cld contribute something additional. Bao Dai expressed doubt as to the possibility of an increased Viet contribution. I repeated my statement and observed that particularly in a war against the Commies, it was necessary for the Vietnamese Govt to insist on official honesty and economy. I thought that Tam had already made a beginning effort at economical administration. I also suggested, although I was not prepared to make a recommendation to that effect, that reduction of the over-valuation of the piaster might reduce cost of the Fr mil operations and thereby allow an increase in budgetary help to the Viet Govt.

3. I observed that the present govt was more efficient than the preceding one and that Tam seemed loyal to Bao Dai. I hoped that he wld remain honest. I understood his predecessor had received a rake-off from the gambling concession of Cholon which he was rumored to have put in his own pocket. I supposed that Tam was now receiving the same rake-off and I trusted that he was putting it into the budget and not in his pocket. There were no objections to his paying himself a salary sufficient to live in a manner befitting the Prime Min and to allow him to save something, but graft wld not be tolerated particularly in this national emergency. I thought Bao Dai blinked a little at my reference to the gambling concession rake-off since he receives one himself. He made no reply to this observation but went on to say that, while Tam had his confidence and he believed him loyal to date, he thought that he was a little subject to bad advice and bad influences.[2]

4. Thus there was a crowd around Tam, including certain Fr elements, who believed in the abolition of the monarchy and its replacement by a republic. He feared that Letourneau himself had republican preferences. Bao Dai said that it was all one to him what the form of govt was. He was willing to get out as he had in 1945. All he sought was the good and the will of the country. I remarked that I felt certain that Letourneau was not trying to do away with the monarchy. When I last talked to him, he had stated with evident sincerity his conviction that the monarchy was necessary to hold Vietnam, with its sectional divisions, together.

5. As luncheon was announced, I was unable to take up the question of the election of a National Assembly, but discussed the matter later with Nguyen De who revealed himself as frankly opposed to any early election in contrast with Tam's plans. Nguyen De stated that, while

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[2] Telegram 1046 to Saigon, Nov. 21, read as follows: "From Allison and Bonsal. Urtel 1028. Dept agrees completely with views you so ably expounded to Bao Dai especially those in numbered paras 2 and 3.

"We are pleased that you took opportunity of making views known in so clear and forceful a manner." (751G.00/11–1852) it was necessary to have a public forum and a legislative check on the administration, elections were too dangerous under present circumstances. What Tam shld do, he insisted, was to broaden the Provisional Assembly by including bona-fide peasants and workers and small shopkeepers. The present National Assembly was too small and composed of big landowners or former mandarins.

HEATH

751G.5/11-1852

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] November 18, 1952.

Subject: Report on my visit to Indochina.

Itinerary

I was in Indochina from October 5 to October 17, both dates inclusive. I spent two days in Cambodia, three in Hanoi, had lunch Vientiane (Laos) and was in Saigon the rest of the time.

List of People Seen

I saw most of our own people including especially the Ambassador and Fred Bartlett [1] who were with me on most of my trips. I was staying with Ambassador and Mrs. Heath on the occasion of the most recent plot to assassinate the Ambassador. I have only the highest praise for the calm and unruffled manner in which they went through this disagreeable experience. The Ambassador took me to Phnom Penh and Hanoi. I spent a day with Fred Bartlett visiting MSA projects in two provinces south of Saigon. Mr. Pickering [2] gave me a briefing on USIS activities. I also had a MAAG briefing by Col. Whisner [3] in the absence of General Trapnell. This briefing included presentations from the Army, Navy and Air Corps representatives in MAAG.

Vietnamese Officials—I saw the Prime Minister (Nguyen Van Tam) and the Defense Minister (Nghiem Van Tri) on several occasions. I also saw the Foreign Minister (Truong Vinh Tong) and a number of other cabinet members. I saw two Chefs de Province in Cochinchina.

In the north I spent a day with the then Governor Pham Van Binh. He took us to see emergency relief work (with American aid) in a number of villages. We also visited a village in which the Gamo was completing its task and witnessed the transfer of a fort from the French

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[1] Frederic P. Bartlett, First Secretary of the Embassy at Saigon; Chief of the Mutual Security Agency Mission.

[2] John E. Pickering, Information Attaché at Saigon.

[3] Col. Emons B. Whisner, Deputy Chief of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group at Saigon.

Expeditionary Force to the Vietnamese military and civil authorities. I saw many local officials and notables, including two Chefs de Province.

French Civil Authorities—M. Letourneau returned a couple of days before my departure. I had lunch with him and he joined a discussion which I had later that afternoon with his assistant, Janot, and his diplomatic adviser, Offroy, whom I saw several times. I also saw something of Gautier, the Governor General, as well as Cheysson who is currently a special adviser to Prime Minister Tam. I also saw the French Commissioner in Cambodia (M. Risterucci) and in Laos (M. Pereyra). In Hanoi I had dinner with Lamarque who is civil adviser to General Linares.

French Military Authorities—I had a long and most interesting visit with Gen. Salan whom I saw on a number of other occasions. His chief of staff, Gen. Allard, was most helpful. Allard's G–2, Col. Boussary, gave the Ambassador and myself a thorough military briefing. Thanks to Allard I met a number of subordinate officers under informal circumstances.

In the north Gen. Linares and his chief of staff, Gen. Berchoux, were most helpful. Gen. Berchoux flew our party around the Hanoi defense perimeter. That afternoon Gen. Linares took us with him on a visit to a current military operation between Nam Dinh and Phat Diem. We drove around by jeep and walked a certain amount. We flew close enough to the operation to get a good bouncing from a couple of projectiles which I thought at first were hostile but which I was later told were probably from French artillery. We also saw a good deal of Gen. Cogny who was Gen. Delattre's aide; he is now in command at Haiduong.

Other persons I saw—Thanks to Al Wellborn I met a half dozen of the leading "attentistes" of Saigon. I had a lengthy dinner meeting with them. Thanks to Paul Sturm in Hanoi, I dined with Nguyen Huu Tri who has since become governor of North Vietnam.

My Impressions

My impressions are summarized below; they represent my personal views.

1. *The enemy is extremely powerful.*

The courage, leadership and initiative which the Viet Minh has been able to mobilize over the past eight years under often adverse conditions is truly amazing. This is a war involving literally hundreds of thousands of regular soldiers on both sides. The Viet Minh is said to have nearly 400,000 men under arms of whom perhaps 160,000 are "regulars". The remainder are divided between regional troops and so-called "populaires". The latter are peasants by day and snipers, guerrilla fighters and saboteurs by night. It is hard to estimate the number of militant sympathizers on the enemy side but it is very considerable. The enemy also terrorizes large numbers into collaboration.

A glance at the latest intelligence map showing the zones of influence of the two sides indicates that the French claim complete control over only a few small areas outside of the principal cities of Saigon and Hanoi. The largest of those areas is the Province of Bentre south of Saigon. The French are, of course, able to move over large areas and in convoy, to utilize most of the principal roads or railroads in the most important parts of the country. Yet even in areas where the French do control major activities, guerrilla warfare, sabotage and terrorism are prevalent. There are large areas of the country completely controlled by the Viet Minh. Some of these areas such as Than Hoa are rich in rice and constitute important support areas for the carrying on of the war. The enemy has been in relatively undisputed control of these for some years now.

In these latter areas, the enemy must possess a very considerable military, economic and political administrative headquarters. Certainly his activities show every evidence of coordination of a high order yet his "capital" presents no vulnerable target; it is believed to be spread out over thirty kilometers of caves, dug-outs and camouflaged structures northwest of Hanoi (perhaps near Thai Nguyen).

In summary, the enemy remains a formidable going concern.

2. *Franco-Vietnamese resistance to the Viet Minh constitutes a remarkable performance.*

It is reasonable to suppose that, when Peking and presumably Moscow decided to arm and train the Viet Minh on the present scale, they hoped and believed that the Viet Minh would drive the French Expeditionary force into the sea. Indeed, there was a moment two years ago when it appeared that this might be possible. The magnificent Franco-Vietnamese reaction under Gen. Delattre's inspiring leadership is too well known to require retelling. The rebuilding of the French fortifications in the Hanoi perimeter, where the former posts were rendered obsolete as a result of the enemy's acquisition of bazookas, mortars and light artillery, was a truly remarkable feat.

I was tremendously impressed at what I saw of the French Army from such leaders as Generals Salan, Linares, Boussary, Allard and Cogny down to the commissioned and noncommissioned officers whom I saw in the field. Their morale and their physical appearance are excellent. As you know, they spend twenty-seven months at a time in Indochina. Some of them are on their third stay in that country.

I am convinced that the Indochina experience, although it has cost the French army the loss of hundreds of badly needed officers, has also greatly strengthened their army by subjecting it to the most trying combat conditions and that the army has come out of this severe test with flying colors.

I found throughout the most grateful appreciation of the quality, quantity and significance of our assistance.

3. *The war is currently progressing favorably from our point of view.*

Without going into a detailed analysis of current military operations, it can be said that generally speaking the tide of war is running in our direction. The enemy losses, particularly in trained officers, were extremely heavy during last year's campaign. The enemy's attempt through offensive operations to jeopardize the position of the French in the Hanoi delta failed significantly. The rebuilding of the French fortifications, referred to above, has presumably precluded any possibility of a successful enemy assault on Hanoi—in the absence of a radical change in the enemy's armament or of a Chinese Communist invasion.

The French claim considerable success in destroying the supply roads to China through aerial bombardment. Photographs which I have seen of these bombardments do indicate remarkable results. Some French officers claim that shipments from China were suspended for several months last summer and may be still suspended owing to the damage done to roads and to the inability of the Viet Minh to receive, protect and distribute supplies. I don't know to what extent these views may be over optimistic.

The French have also bombarded and destroyed certain irrigation works in the Thanh Hoa district south of the delta and have thereby considerably reduced the rice supply available to the enemy.

These bombardments of roads and dams make it necessary for the Viet Minh to mobilize the peasants to make repairs. This work of course is extremely hazardous and difficult owing both to the continuance of French bombardments and also owing to the dropping of delayed-action missiles, timed so as to explode at night when repair work is in progress. It is understood that the enemy is encountering considerable difficulty in recruiting labor and that his political prestige has sunk considerably in the eyes of the local population. (Governor Binh told me that the last time the Viet Minh's General Giap was in Thanh Hoa an attempt was made to assassinate him and in fact seven of his staff officers were killed.)

Similarly the enemy is having trouble in recruiting soldiers; prisoners taken recently have, according to French accounts, included boys of sixteen. The number of prisoners has increased of late, indicating lowered enemy morale. Furthermore, deserters from the enemy's armed forces have recently been running at the rate of about fifty per month, a novel development.

Nevertheless, these favorable developments do not in my opinion add up to any real change in the relative strength of the adversaries or indicate any significant decrease in the enemy's potential. The French military authorities, however, speak with some optimism and considerable mystery, of favorable prospects during the current fighting season. Several mentioned to me the possibility of "un tournant favorable" in April. They are counting upon making effective use in parachute operations of the important increment of transport planes recently arranged, but I do not get the impression that anyone really expects a decisive development.

4. *The organization of the Vietnamese National Army is proceeding according to schedule but there are officer morale problems.*

According to present plans a Vietnamese National Army of eight divisions should be in being by the first of January 1955. These plans are to date being executed according to schedule. There are over 5,000 French officers and noncommissioned officers serving with the Vietnamese forces for purposes of training and leadership. These forces have, I was told, given a good account of themselves in battle especially when led by French officers. They are furthermore performing important duties in connection with internal security.

Concurrently an important increase is being made in the number of home guard troops. Villagers are being supplied with rifles and are being given the responsibility of guarding their villages against Viet Minh attack.

A slow decrease in the number of French or French Union troops in Indochina has been initiated. This may involve as many as 3,000 this year out of a total of 120,000. Vietnamese troops formerly serving with the French army are being transferred quite rapidly to the Vietnamese National Army in spite of a certain reluctance on the part of some of the Vietnamese involved. At the present time on the Franco-Vietnamese side, for every French or French Union soldier there are nearly two and one-half Vietnamese soldiers.

General Salan expressed to me general satisfaction with the progress being made in the creation of the Vietnamese National Army. He said that from the technical point of view there was little difficulty. Manpower both for officers and enlisted personnel is available with suitable physical and mental attainments. The problem, however, in his judgment is one of indoctrinating the Vietnamese officers, who are quick and intelligent, with the spirit of patriotism and self-sacrifice which distinguishes the French professional soldier. General Salan told me that the losses of French officers killed were running at the rate of about one per day during the first six months of this year. There was a decrease in this rate of loss during the rainy season but with the resumption of active fighting, it is going up again. These losses make apparent the difficult role which an officer must play in this type of warfare if he is to give his men effective leadership. On the other hand, during the first nine months of this year only nine Vietnamese officers were killed. Salan stressed that this was not a fair statistical comparison but he did consider it to be an indication of relative morale at the present time.

I am sure that, with our help and with the continuance of the present French training and operations program, the Vietnamese National Army will come into being as scheduled. It will be a political-military force of some importance in the general situation. I am convinced, however, that it will not be able to cope with the Viet Minh unless the force of the Viet Minh is considerably diminished before the date indicated. In fact, if the Viet Minh remains at its present strength, the pull of political magnetism will be in the direction of an absorption of the new national army through some sort of political formula which will in fact reflect a communist victory. There is thus a serious risk that the arms which we have furnished will be turned against us and will contribute to the strength of a new enemy state.

5. *Vietnamese political vitality is improving but remains weak.*

There is no question that Prime Minister Tam is an improvement over his predecessor Huu. Tam is a real leader. The present Minister of Defense is also able and energetic. The Minister of Information, Giao, is also said to be a man of ability but his relationships with Tam are said to be such as to greatly curtail his usefulness.

Other members of the cabinet did not make a first-rate impression. They seemed deficient in energy or in the qualities of political leadership so necessary in the present situation. Some are said to be professionally competent.

Generally speaking the Vietnamese Government is very strongly oriented toward France. Four of the cabinet members have European wives. Most of them have had close connections with the French Administration prior to the present war. People with a true nationalist background, i.e., people who may be expected to take a definite role in the new Vietnamese state after the present war are a distinct minority. Symptomatic in this respect is the Chief of the Province of Mytho whom I saw. He has had twenty-eight years of service in the civil administration, was taken over by the Vietnamese Government from the French civil service and looks forward to an early retirement. He is I am sure an able and competent administrator but not a dynamic political force.

The Vietnamese officials with whom I spoke were unanimous in their desire for the complete independence of their country and they expressed confidence that as soon as the war was over the French would depart leaving the question of Franco-Vietnamese relations to be settled in accordance with the will of the Vietnamese people. They all recognized that without the French army the independence of the country from communism would be unattainable. Yet all these officials stated that they would not have participated in the Vietnamese Government unless they had been sure that the French would leave after the war. (The conversation which I had with former Prime Minister Huu was most disillusioning. He expressed great bitterness over the form of his dismissal and is doing everything he can to draw himself away from the present situation and from the French whom he denounces in the harshest terms. He is also extremely anti-Bao Dai. The fact that this former Prime Minister feels it possible to divorce himself so entirely from the cause with which he was identified is revealing.)

There is a considerable amount of good work being done by the Vietnamese Government. I was impressed with the health and agriculture officials whom I met. I was told that the Gamos are doing an aggressive and intelligent job, but there are not enough of them. The Gamos are groups of generally young Vietnamese men and women who go into liberated villages in order to attend to emergency political, military and administrative requirements. They feed the villagers, root out communists, locate arms caches, set up reliable local administration and home guards and then turn the village over to the regular authorities.

But there is not enough faith and energy on our side. One cannot help feeling that at present the major part of the energy and leadership of Vietnam is either in the enemy camp or waiting on the sidelines to see who is going to win.

The Vietnamese Government has failed, I believe, to draw in a very large number of people from the sidelines. My meeting with the "attentistes" was most discouraging in this respect. These people, mostly intelligent and able members of that bourgeoisie which would be presumably destroyed by the Viet Minh, spoke most emphatically of their distrust of France and of their feeling that France does not intend to relinquish political control of the country after the present emergency. Since France is certainly arming the Vietnamese at an increasing pace and contemplates the early constitution of a wholly Vietnamese officered force and since it should be evident that France is incapable for a much longer period of maintaining the military effort required to hold Indochina, these allegations of lack of confidence in France are really an expression, in my judgment, of doubt as to who is going to win the war.

In summary, at present the Vietnamese political struggle does not have sufficient vitality to promote or to give hope of an acceptable, i.e., a non-communist political solution of the present situation. Such leadership and energy as it displays can often be traced to French sources. The widespread corruption believed to exist at most echelons in the regime contrasts markedly with the reputation for austerity which the Viet Minh has achieved.

It is surprising how easy it is to discuss the political situation in Vietnam without mentioning Bao Dai. Bao Dai's failure to take a truly active role in the situation is distressing. Perhaps he may change his tactics on his return to Vietnam after several months in France but no one is very optimistic. The only bright spot politically is the removal of Bao Dai's close friend Binh as governor of North Vietnam and his replacement by Tri who is a leader of a party which was formerly of considerable importance from a nationalistic point of view. But even there Tam is said to have been the main architect of the change rather than Bao Dai. I believe that Bao Dai continues to be potentially an important factor but that he is losing ground as a result of his own inactivity and indolence. Is it possible, as someone remarked to me, that the Emperor is the leading "attentiste" in the country?

In summary, the present Vietnamese Government depends for its existence on French armed strength. It will have no effective strength if the French depart leaving the Viet Minh militarily as strong as it is at present.

6. *Doubt as to the ultimate military outcome is the principal factor in the current situation.*

At every turn in my examination of the situation in Indochina, I was struck by the degree to which doubt as to the ultimate military outcome exercises a paralyzing effect on developments in the political field which might be favorable to us. The large number of "attentistes" who spoke of lack of confidence in France's ultimate intentions really lack confidence in the ability of the Franco-Vietnamese forces to defeat the Viet Minh. No reasonable man can have any illusions as to the ability of the French to continue to maintain a colonial relationship with Indochina; they are through and they know it. All this talk about lack of confidence in France's political intentions really shows lack of confidence in Franco-Vietnamese military capabilities.

I do not claim to know whether in the long run stable non-communist governments can exist on the perimeter of a dynamic Communist China in the absence of clear-cut Western guarantees that external invasion of or internal aggression supported from abroad against these non-communist countries will be met with force. I am confident, however, that a defeat of the present communist forces in Indochina affords the only prospect for the constitution of a really viable and dependable non-communist government in Vietnam. Such a government could be constituted if and when the Viet Minh is militarily diminished to a point where the Vietnamese National Army could match it in the field. Such a government would have to draw upon the talents available in the ranks of the present "attentistes"; it would probably have to throw overboard a number of politicians and officials too closely identified with France. It would in the long run, if it showed political sagacity, draw to itself a number of the non-communist elements which may have been misled or coerced into support of the Viet Minh. It would eventually aspire to become a government of national union; but unless the Viet Minh is defeated in the field the prospect is one of Communist domination of Indochina as soon as the French pull out.

7. *The French approach to the military situation gives ground for apprehension.*

I cannot state too emphatically my admiration for the fight which is being waged by the French army and by their Vietnamese allies under most difficult and arduous conditions. I have a very clear impression that the military leaders on our side are using the resources available to them in the most aggressive and combative manner consistent with sound strategy and tactics. They are definitely not resting on their oars.

Nevertheless, from a political point of view there are a number of factors in the thinking of the French civilian element both in Saigon and Paris which seem to me definitely disquieting. These factors may be briefly enumerated as follows:

a) Opposition to continued expenditure of French manpower and resources in Indochina is growing in France. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that the French Assembly may refuse to vote any more funds to carry on the struggle in Indochina after 1954 or at most 1955. (Chevigne, a member of the French cabinet, is reported to have told Bao Dai that after 1953, France would not continue to support the defense of Vietnam at the present level.) The Assembly may demand the termination of the conflict on a basis which will permit the withdrawal of France's military and civilian elements from the country. If this is the prospect, and I am afraid that it is, many Frenchmen will argue against conducting military operations other than as holding operations. Why increase the cost in blood and treasure? would be their argument.

b) The feeling generated among French politicians and officials due to Franco-American exchanges on American aid are not calculated to produce a dynamic approach to military operations in Indochina. When Letourneau arrived in Saigon about October 15, I found him in a petulant and discouraged mood on this score.

c) It is sometimes argued particularly in French civilian circles that if the French are too successful against the Viet Minh the result will be a Chinese Communist invasion of Indochina. I think this is probably fallacious under present circumstances but I do think that it influences some thinking and perhaps some action.

d) Then there is a vague Micawberish feeling about a possible improvement in "la situation mondiale". This improvement would magically change the face of things in Indochina; therefore, why struggle in such a costly fashion there? This argument is indeed a false and dangerous one. It should be obvious that "la situation mondiale", if there is such a thing, will be influenced only by the political and military progress or lack of it in the various theaters of actual conflict which make up "la situation mondiale".

e) It is also alleged from time to time that it is useless for the French army to expand the territory it controls in Indochina as long as the Vietnamese are unable to supply the necessary administrative cadres and security forces to hold this territory against reinfiltration and subversion by the Viet Minh. This argument I think confuses cause and effect. The Vietnamese administrative cadres and security forces will be effective in carrying out their tasks and in securing the cooperation of the local population only to the degree that a confidence in ultimate victory on their side exists. It is doubt on this score which causes the major difficulties with which both the French and Vietnamese are confronted. Under present circumstances, of course, the success of any military operation should be judged not in terms of territory liberated and occupied but in terms of the extent to which it is possible to bring the enemy to combat and to inflict losses upon him.

8. *Recommendation for a bilateral or possibly trilateral re-examination of the military situation in Indochina.*

On the basis of the above I believe that improvement in the military situation is the only key to a real improvement of our position in Indochina. In spite of the magnificent work of the French Union Forces I do not believe that that improvement is taking place sufficiently rapidly enough to guarantee us an acceptable position when the French Union Forces withdraw. I believe that unless military progress is accelerated we run the serious risk of finding that a large part of our aid to the Vietnamese Government will fall into the hands of our Communist enemies.

I therefore recommend that as soon as the French raise with us the question of Indochina, presumably in the context of a request for further aid, we propose an immediate high level examination of the military situation with a view to answering the following questions:

a) Are the military resources and capabilities available or scheduled for our side sufficient to warrant a reasonable hope of a military decision or at least of a situation which the Vietnamese army can handle within the next two years assuming Chinese Communist assistance to the Viet Minh remains on the present scale?

b) If the answer to (*a*) is negative, what additional military resources and capabilities would have to be supplied in order to assure a reasonable expectation of a decision or of a marked decrease in Viet Minh strength within the next two years under the conditions stated.

c) How could the additional capabilities and resources set forth in answer to question (*b*) be supplied?

I am sure that a great deal of work has been done in Saigon and Paris—and presumably also in the Pentagon—on the above questions. But I am not aware that there has been any high level bilateral coordination of views.

It is possible that the above study might produce a negative result. If it did, we would at least know where we were and would be able to make plans accordingly; but I should think there would be a strong probability that we might get some sort of a practical answer from the military. It seems clear that if large numbers of additional ground forces are required, the US would not be in a position politically or perhaps militarily to furnish them. They would have to come from France. This would present a grave political problem for the French Government. We would have to step up our assistance heavily in all types of equipment and perhaps help transport troops to Indochina. SHAPE would probably yell its head off. But I can hardly believe that the forces needed to secure a military decision in Indochina would, for the limited time they would have to be absent from Europe, be a decisive factor in the defense of Western Europe against a Soviet invasion or that during the time contemplated a German army of any size or effectiveness would be created. Furthermore, the reaching of a military decision in Indochina would immediately relieve the French army of a great burden and permit it to play its part in Western Europe. I recognize, however, that a requirement for further ground troops in an amount of, say, more than two divisions, would raise very serious problems.

It is possible, however, that the military examination which has been suggested would reveal that the striking power and mobility of the forces presently in Indochina could be greatly stepped up through increased air power and perhaps the provision of special weapons not currently used there. I know that it is the feeling of some elements of our MAAG in Saigon that the French have not provided adequate aircraft personnel (both crews and maintenance people) to get the best possible use of the aircraft already in the country. The provision of additional transport planes which was arranged for this fall has very greatly increased the mobility of the French forces and their ability to conduct parachute operations without any very important increment of manpower. It may well be that the military will come up with some new constructive ideas of this kind.

The question arises whether the British should be invited to the proposed military discussions between ourselves and the French. I am of the opinion that they should be invited because of their interest in the general area and because of the possibility that they could contribute constructive ideas and perhaps even make certain arms and equipment available to the French. The Australians and the New

Zealanders should presumably also be invited for the same reasons. I do not think that we should contemplate any qualitative change in the forces currently engaged in Indochina, i.e., the introduction of British, American or Chinese Nationalist troops.

In addition, I recommend that consideration be given to having the incoming President make a statement as soon as possible regarding the importance of the Indochina struggle. (I have already addressed a memorandum to Mr. Allison on this subject.) [4] We should also give further consideration to the French proposal of a tripartite statement regarding the intentions and objectives of the United States, the United Kingdom and France in Southeast Asia. Such a statement might have distinct possibilities of usefulness.

But the major requirement of the present situation is a serious re-examination of the military situation and prospects. It is probable that the results of such a re-examination could not be available and implemented in time to influence the conduct of operations during the current fighting season which will end in May of 1953, but they should be of definite value in the next season beginning in October, 1953.

A failure to secure a clear military view of prospects and possibilities for our side and to reach decisions in consequence would be most unfortunate in view of the fact that time is definitely not on our side.

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[4] Not identified.

Editorial Note

On November 18, 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the President-elect, conferred with President Truman and members of his Cabinet at the White House. During the meeting, Secretary of State Acheson briefed the President-elect on the world situation. In his memoirs, President Truman reports that Acheson stated the following in regard to Indochina:

> "We had been concerned for a long time about the course of action in Indo-China. There was a strong body of opinion in France which regarded this as a lost cause that was bleeding France both financially and by undermining the possibility of French-German equality in European defense.
>
> "There had been a noticeable lack of French aggressive attitude from a military point of view in Indo-China. The central problem in Indo-China was the fence-sitting by the Population. They would never come down on one side or another until they had a reasonable assurance of who would be the victor and that their interests would be served by the victor.
>
> "We are helping France to the extent of carrying between one-third and one-half of the financial burden of the Indo-Chinese war. We

have had military discussions between the five powers—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia and New Zealand—which had not been effective in devising agreed military solutions against the contingency of overt Chinese intervention in Indo-China. The French now sought political discussions to carry the matter forward.

"This is an urgent matter upon which the new administration must be prepared to act." (Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, volume II, *Years of Trial and Hope, 1946–1952* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday and Company, 1956), page 519.)

For documentation on the transition between the Truman and Eisenhower administrations in regard to matters of foreign affairs, see volume I.

751J.5/11–2252 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 22, 1952—4 p. m.

1061. Rptd info Paris unnumbered. I visited Luang Prabang Nov 19 and 20 at invitation Crown Prince Savang. King Sisavang Vong, suffering severely from gout and liver ailment, did not receive me.

Contrary to my expectations, Savang was not anxious discuss question of representation in Wash, other than state his desire that mission be established fairly promptly and candidate found who wld be fully acceptable to Laotian Govt including Assembly. He mentioned no names. (In this connection, Ourot Souvannavong has informed FSO Thomson that he intends leave for Paris within next few days resume his activities as Councillor Fr Union while awaiting possible nomination as Min to US. His Fr citizenship has been major pretext for opposition in Cab to his nomination.)

Savang's principal desire was to unfold thesis which Laotian Govt presently trying to put over in Fr Union High Council and elsewhere, running as fols: Who [*So*] far as Laos concerned, war is virtually over, with remaining VM intruders, in north and in Boloven plateau, numbering not over 500, about to be eliminated within next few months. "Indochinese" war, therefore, henceforth misnomer since Laos has achieved natl unity and independence and is entering quasi-normal situation. In absence Chi invasion, remaining conflict is essentially VN civil war. While continuing accept treaty obligations to France and other AS entered into at time independence granted, Laos does not consider itself obliged expend natl effort in settlement VN civil war. This issue arose shortly after death De Lattre when Gen Salan requested use Laos paratroop battalion in Tonkin; Laos refused, and will refuse any similar request.

Laotian National Army, according Savang, is capable assuring natl def against any threat short of attack by China. Def posture can be improved by transformation two relatively immobile infantry battalions into paratroop units, thus providing mobile counter-striking force of three parachute battalions and separate commando units. Overall increase in numbers Lao Army neither necessary nor economic; only modernization is needed. Material aid for latter purpose promised by Fr will be slow in arriving, and need addit transport planes is vital.

Aside from desire avoid mil commitments in VN, another factor behind Savang's thesis is desire encourage fon econ investment through popularization idea that war risks of IC no longer applicable to Laos.

Altho I did not take occasion this visit to argue question, I am concerned by this new evidence Laotian separatism extending beyond purely internal matters and into sphere common def. Safety of Laos, whose slight weight in regional power complex Savang is first to admit, is patently dependent upon outcome of Commie-maintained war whose focal point is in Tonkin, despite Laotian natl antipathy to VN.

HEATH

751G.00/11-2452 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, November 24, 1952—2 p. m.

3092. Rptd info Saigon 95, London unnumbered. Deptel 2914, Nov 19 (Saigon 1030).[1] Emb has no knowledge of and has seen no indication of Fr Govt intention to reduce present scale of Fr mil support IC after 1953. This question is in sense perennial one—will Fr Parl continue vote appropriations necessary for IC effort?

Action of Natl Assembly on Nov 19 in postponing vote on Min of Assoc States civil budget (Embtel 3049, Saigon 92)[2] and SFIO Natl Council resolution calling for negots with Ho Chi Minh are not expected to affect seriously eventual outcome of Natl Assembly consideration of question Fr mil effort IC in 1953. FonAff debate scheduled begin Dec 4, which will include IC, shld provide outlet for all criticism and opposition Fr policy IC, but even Socialists in recent resolution did not speak of withdrawal and it is not believed that Natl Assembly wld under existing circumstances fail to provide support requested for Fr Union forces in IC in 1953. This debate shld however give clearer indication polit and public reaction to IC problem. With US making very substantial contribution IC def (which however, is not yet sufficiently known to Fr public) and with Vietnamese armies beginning to take shape, it is not believed likely, despite expected outcry in Natl Assembly for various solutions, such as internationalization of IC problem, negots with Ho Chi Minh and Fr withdrawal from IC, that govt will not be able obtain approval its 1953 IC def budget. It is not possible to say how much longer such conditions will obtain as answer must depend upon existing circumstances, both within France and IC as well as elsewhere in world, when question of Fr mil support beyond 1953 arises.

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[1] In telegram 2914 to Paris, Nov. 19, the Department of State requested the comments of the Embassy on the report contained in telegram 1028 from Saigon, Nov. 18 (p. 284), that Vietnam might not be able to count on the existing scale of French military support beyond 1953. (751G.00/11-1852)

[2] In telegram 3049 from Paris, Nov. 20, it was reported that on Nov. 19, the National Assembly had voted to postpone examination of the budget of the Ministry for the Associated States until debate was held on Indochina policy. (751.21/11-2052)

Re this gen connection, press reports of Pinay's desire to link IC and Korean problems are of some interest in that Fr support in UN of Indian solution for Korean armistice negots is believed to be related to Fr desire to find solution in IC. Pinay, and others, probably view IC solution as possible within overall settlement and see in successful Korean negots eagerly sought opportunity to end IC war. In event successful conclusion Korean negots, Fr may be expected to look to inclusion IC among problems to be settled after truce, and for this reason wld strongly favor overall settlement in FE at such time.

DUNN

751G.5 MSP/11-2452 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, November 24, 1952—2 p. m.

1065. Rptd info Paris unn. Joint Emb, STEM and MAAG message.

A. The primary purpose of Embtel 983, Nov 13 was to stress conviction US missions Saigon that (1) if AS and France unable to increase their financial contribution IC war effort either by increasing revenues or by economizing on expenditures (2) if US convinced expansion mil effort required to bring speedier victory and (3) if outside budgetary assistance as well as aid in kind necessary for objective in (2), it would appear to be in interest of US to relax previous policy regarding financing budgetary deficits.

B. Present tel covers fol additional points: (1) Local financing. STEM has pointed out that present AS tax system generally regressive and that important elements in IC economy appear to be earning large profits—indeed profits which might in some instances be called war profiteering. If these excessive profits could be absorbed by forced bond issue or by special export exchange tax, AS could finance larger share of war costs. Impossible state how great these are but as indicated in Emb desp 495, April 9, 1952,[1] total Fr profits transferred to France in 1950 could be conservatively estimated at 36 million dols. No recent figures available, but continued expansion IC economy since 1950 may have counterbalanced effects of fall in rubber prices on 1950 profit picture. In addition we believe Chinese middlemen and some Vietnamese are also earning handsome war associated profits. We recognize AS tax authorities would be possibly unenthusiastic and certainly inefficient in collecting additional taxes from own nationals. It would also be difficult collect taxes from Chinese who do not keep European type books so that any attempt to divert continuing profits for financing war effort might fall largely on Fr houses. This does not appear to be valid reason why this source of revenue should not be tapped but opposition powerful Fr elements can be expected.

(2) Extravagant living. While battle rages in the north to protect IC from Chi Commie domination, business and life as usual continue in all principal cities of the AS. There is practically no rationing (gasoline) no price controls (rice export taxes) no wage controls, no forced savings. Senior public officials from Bao Dai down appear to have sufficient funds not only for living well but for transfer of savings outside country. Certainly same applies to higher Fr officials and businessmen.

(3) Canadian and Belgian pressure. US and Metropolitan French have hitherto been unable to induce sense of dedication and austerity in IC which would allow legal govts divert larger portion of earnings of nationals and of local Fr elements to war effort and less to plush living. Both US and Fr, however, are so deeply committed in this theatre that relatively little room remains for bargaining with Fr in IC or Assoc States elements. STEM for instance, in practice unable to carry out any threat of reducing or temporarily terminating economic aid in order apply pressure to speed up necessary reforms. This inability due to the adverse reaction which stopping impact programs and important commercial imports would have in population. In view these circumstances, we suggest that if Canada and Belgium can be induced to consider extending aid in goods or money for IC war, as presently uncommitted partners for this theatre they might be able secure prior guarantees from both French and AS. These might include promise that wartime profit taxes, exchange taxes, financial transfer controls or "forced" aid issues would be instituted and honestly applied, that present relatively high standard of living of influential groups would not be officially tolerated, high salaries etc., at the expense of war effort. In short that AS would try to approxi-

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[1] For extracts, see p. 101.

mate same dedication and personal sacrifice which presently exhibited by top Vietminh leaders and which to all accounts is one reason for Vietminh support among population. Canada and Belgium would be free to point out that taxpayers while willing help IC war effort should not be called upon indirectly to contribute war profiteering and present unrealistically high standards of living top Fr and AS elements.

C. Emb STEM and MAAG realize suggestions this tel are radical and not yet supported by thorough going studies of tax and monetary systems including natl income estimates. They are presented in order assure no opportunity unexplored to reduce cost war to US and to France or hasten victory.

D. STEM sending separate tel re assignment consultants make studies outlined above.

HEATH

751G.00/11-2452

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Under Secretary of State (Bruce) [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] November 24, 1952.

Subject: Military Developments in Viet-Nam

Since my last memorandum to you on this subject dated November 17th,[2] several developments of note have occurred.

The Franco-Vietnamese reconnaissance in force which had advanced during the week of November 10th to Phu Doan was successful in capturing large quantities of Communist matériel, the most significant of which was 25 tons of 120 mm mortar shells of Soviet manufacture (about 1,500 shells) plus four Molotova trucks of Russian origin. The complete list is attached [3] showing Chinese, Japanese and even US stocks as well. This is the first time that such significant quantities of enemy matériel have been seized.

The reconnaissance in force, having completed its mission, was engaged in drawing back when it was violently attacked on November 17th by a strong Viet Minh force, with the result that six Franco-Vietnamese half-tracks and two tanks were destroyed. The enemy is said to have suffered over 1,500 casualties while losses to friendly forces were about 150 killed. Phu Tho is believed still to be held by the Franco-Vietnamese forces.

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[1] Transmitted through H. Freeman Matthews, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

[2] In his memorandum of Nov. 17, Allison reported that the major Viet Minh drive along the Black River had shown no new developments for several days, and that a French countermove out of the northwest corner of the delta perimeter had not met any resistance of consequence. (751G.00/11-1752)

[3] Not printed.

On the southern front, along the Black River, Viet Minh units have captured the Franco-Vietnamese garrison at Moc Chau (at the southeast flank of the defensive line) and have virtually surrounded Lai Chau and its airstrip (the northwest flank). The Franco-Vietnamese Headquarters at Son La (see map),[4] withdrew according to newspaper accounts, on November 23rd, and the defending forces, amounting to about nine battalions are now grouped in the vicinity of Na San. The Viet Minh have surrounded Na San and its airstrip, and a strong attack is anticipated. The ability of the 6,000 odd Franco-Viet forces to hold is uncertain.

Flare-ups within the Hanoi–Haiphong perimeter continue, with a recent attack near Hung Yen being of unusual intensity. The post was successfully defended, but many Viet Minh soldiers continue to roam the area and constitute a continuing threat.

There continues to be no evidence of Chinese Communist preparations for invasion in the near future.

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[4] Not reproduced.

751G.00/11–2952 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, November 29, 1952—3 p. m.

1107. Dept pass Paris. Rptd info Paris 177, Hanoi unnumbered. As interim reply to Deptel 1074, Nov 25,[1] wld state we have the opinions of Gen Alessandri (see mytel 1087, Nov 27)[2] in whom we have confidence, of Gen Allard and others that it is possible to increase considerably and promptly the size of the Vietnamese Natl Army, provided France can and will supply an increased number of officers (of company and field grade) and non-coms. The question of equipment is not difficult and, while we do not have as yet Alessandri's estimate of pay and maintenance of forty additional battalions, the sum shld not represent any considerable increase over the large amounts being spent by France, US and Vietnam for this war. Gen Trapnell is presently in Tonkin where he will discuss this problem with Salan. On his return we will get off a joint tel. It seems only too clear now after loss of Nghialo and the present disquieting operation at Na San where a large portion of the Franco-Vietnamese mobile striking forces is tied down in a possibly strong but dangerously isolated defensive position, that the number of troops in the field against the VM must be increased promptly and substantially. It is only too obvious that the opposing forces are too nearly in balance.

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[1] In telegram 1074 to Saigon, Nov. 25, the Department of State requested an evaluation of the progress being made in the development of the National Army of Vietnam. (751G.00/11–1852)

[2] Not printed.

There appears to be little difficulty in rapidly recruiting privates nor is there any great difficulty found in training cadres of company grade although careful screening is required.

The present difficulty, as Col de Brebission points out in Paris tel 136 [*3136*] of Nov 26 to Dept[3] lies in lack of cadres which only France can now supply. France cld, we believe, send the 200, or 300 additional officers and the 1,000 or 1,200 non-coms but, presumably, only at the cost of falling behind on her commitments to NATO and her ambition to set up the strongest force in Europe before a German army gets well started. There is an unresolved conflict between Fr requirements under NATO and her prosecution of a shooting war against communism in IC which must be resolved in the interest of a global defense and strategy against the Communist Central Command. The extra cadres which France shld send to break this near stalemate shld only be on temporary loan. The majority of them shld return after a year or two (during which it shld be possible to train Viet officers of field grade) all the better, militarily speaking, for having taken part in actual war. It is neither possible nor policy for us to send Amer troops or cadres to strengthen the situation in IC. We do not know whether it wld be possible for us to send temporarily additional Amer troops to Europe (train Amer recruits abroad instead of at home?)in an effort to restore European balance and confidence pending the return of some Fr officers and troops after victory in IC.

As regards the request in Deptel 1074 for our assessment of morale and effectiveness of new units, recent experience has shown that where Viet troops are commanded by good armed Fr-Viet cadres, they give a very good account of themselves.

HEATH

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[3] Not printed.

FOA files, FRC Acc. No. 55 A 374, MAAC files

Memorandum by the Assistant Director for Mutual Security (Tannenwald)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

Summary of remarks of Theodore Tannenwald, Jr., Assistant Director for Mutual Security and Chief of Staff, made as an oral report and given to DMS Staff on December 3, 1952, regarding his trip to the Far East and Middle East October 19, 1952 to November 30, 1952.

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[1] Circulated in the interdepartmental Mutual Assistance Advisory Committee as document MAAC Memo No. 4, Jan. 12, 1953.

Indo-China

My first stop on this trip was Saigon in Indo-China where I spent three full days along with Ty Wood. Most of the work was on the economic side but I did have a chance to check into the political and military situation somewhat. This was at a given time before the recent offensive of the Viet Minh had started full blast and certainly before it had turned into the Thai region where the fighting is now going on. While I was there the Viet Minh had made their first moves but everybody was hopeful they would be able to be contained and not get into the Red River Delta.

On the economic side the biggest problem was the exchange rate. There is an artificial rate of 20 piasters to the dollar. The real rate is about 50 piasters to the dollar and great problem in doing anything about it is that the piaster is tied to the franc. Any devaluation will affect the franc. The feeling was not to tamper with the exchange rate on the ground that if you did get a more realistic rate, in the long run you would not save any money—the prices would go up and the economic effect would be the same after about six months. After a temporary period the cost to the French of the war in Indo-China and the value of our counterpart would end up being the same as it was now. I got this story from everybody—both the French and the local American officials. The biggest argument was a political one—devaluation would give the Viet Minh a good propaganda line and they would then say to the Indochinese people—the currency of the country isn't worth anything and your government is taking away what little you have.

There was one special problem arising out of some importers making a tremendous profit out of the MSA program. They were bringing stuff in at the official rate under our program and then reselling it at the unofficial rate, thus collecting two and one-half times as many piasters as it cost them. We checked into that pretty carefully and found that it only amounted to between two and three million dollars worth of the total program. However, all agreed that this was a serious problem in terms of Congressional reaction and that something had to be done about it. MSA/W and the MSA mission in Indo-China are dealing with this problem right now.

Rice production is a tremendous problem because of the fact so many parts of Indo-China are so insecure and cannot be put into production. Awhile back they had a large amount of rice exports which caused the local price of rice to rise tremendously. The local officials thought they could cure this by banning exports but it didn't work out that way—whether it was because stuff got out because of smuggling, or hoarding, I couldn't determine. When I left they had a feeling that the stuff would begin to come out on the local market as the new crop was about to come out of the fields and that would make it essential that the old stuff come out before the new crop.

The most important thing I got out of Indo-China was a general reaction to the political and military situation. I gained several impressions:

The French appear to have little real intention of getting out of Indo-China; they are doing everything they can do perpetuate their control and at the same time to create a facade that will satisfy the U.S. and other countries who are doing everything they can for the Indochinese.

French firms were getting 95% of the MSA business because (1) they could get credit from the banks; the banks won't give loans to local businesses because the banks are controlled by the French; (2) the French concerns have the opportunity to jiggle with dollar resources from the Metropole and there was evidence that these concerns were using these resources to pay subsidies on imports. The French importer could get that extra money whereas a local importer could not and this enabled the French importers to make low bids on MSA business.

The French are in control of the banking and currency and of transportation. The same is true of coastal shipping. I spent an evening with a local Indochinese who was a President of an Air Transport Company and he had been unable to get permission to fly passengers from Saigon to Hanoi because this would compete with Air Viet Nam, a French company.

On the military side the French are moving ahead in the training of the ground troops because they need them to fight the Viet Minh. The French are doing practically nothing however with regard to Indo-China's naval or air arm with the result you will get a situation where the Associated States will have a good ground force but no air or naval force to go with it.

I saw only Viet Nam—did not get to Laos or Cambodia. As far as the local Vietnamese officials are concerned, they are married to French girls and my feeling is they weren't concerned about the welfare of the Vietnamese people as a whole.

I came away with a rather disillusioned impression of the situation in Indo-China and the feeling that we have been kidding ourselves and that we either ought to recognize the fact that the French are not going to give up their control or decide that the French ought to give up their control and do our utmost to see that they do in a reasonable time. We ought not be kidding ourselves by continuing to assume in our policy planning that the French will give independence to the Associated States.

I spent a good deal of time going into the common-use program in Indo-China which is not a common-use program at all. It is strictly an end-item program. I understand the '53 program has the Army catalog numbers on it. I'm not saying the program is wrong but we ought to stop kidding ourselves. We ought to recognize it for what it is.

[Here follows discussion of areas other than Indochina.]

751G.5/12–552 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, December 5, 1952—noon.

1149. Rptd info Paris 182, Hanoi 127, Manila 114. Re Deptel 1141, December 3.[1] The French have not asked for additional aircraft. What they do request and General Trapnell is urgently recommending is that the 30 F–8's already programmed be expedited to arrive here not later than January and that delivery of the 8 B–26's scheduled to arrive at rate of one a month during calendar year 1953 be accelerated.

The French yesterday made, however, urgent request on which in Trapnell's and my opinion immediately favorable action in some form or other should be taken. The request is that 150 American Air Force mechanics be detailed immediately to Nhatrang Air Base for one month to give 50-hour checks to 18 C–47's and 100-hour checks on another 18 C–47's. Nhatrang was chosen presumably because presence mechanics would be less conspicuous than if detailed to a Tonkin base or to Saigon. The French have made the same imperative request of the French Air Ministry, but according local information, French Metropolitan Air Force has only a few if any surplus mechanics for immediate despatch. The French request is entirely legitimate. When Salan asked for and was granted the 50 additional C–47's late last summer (21 were provided by US), sufficient crews were available for normal maintenance. It was expected these would be used for tactical drops of parachute troops. No sustained airlift operation was or could have been foreseen at that time. With loss Nghialo and the ensuing necessary decision of French command to attempt hold Na San to prevent overrunning that country and Laos, an air lift had to be instituted. As a result, the C–47's are operating at several times the normal rate, entailing urgent increased maintenance.

As an alternative to sending American mechanics, Trapnell and I have suggested possibility of the 36 planes being sent for repairs and checks to Clark Field. Trip to Manila would add extra flying time to the planes, but that might be the more practical operation. I can see no policy objection either to despatching American maintenance crews for a few weeks stay here or providing maintenance at Clark Field. On several occasions we have provided mechanical specialists for brief periods for instruction and repair of certain American equipment. This emergency maintenance is vital to holding of Na San and for meeting any other emergency air-borne operations.

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[1] Telegram 1141 to Saigon, Dec. 3, read as follows: "Eyes only Amb. In view possibility Fr request, suggest you discuss with Trapnell nature possible Fr requirements additional aircraft because of destruction and attrition resulting from current mil operations. We wish to examine possibility of being helpful but can of course make no commitments at this stage." (751G.5/12–352)

General Chassin, CINC French Air Force FE, arrives today from Tonkin to consult with Trapnell.[2]

HEATH

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[2] In telegram 1183 to Saigon, Dec. 8 (repeated for information to Paris as telegram 3241 and to Manila as telegram 1651), the Department of State responded as follows: "Secy of Air and Air Staff giving urgent consideration matters brought up reftel [telegram 1149]. Chief of Staff has cabled Gen [Otto P.] Weyland CG of FEAF for his views. Suggest you make sure detailed info being developed re Fr requirements be made available directly to Weyland and rptd here." (751G.5/12–552)

751G.00/12–552 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 5, 1952—5 p. m.

1153. Dept pass Hanoi. Rptd info Hanoi 128, Paris unnumbered. Gov Tri came to see me before returning Hanoi and discussed at considerable length his plans for cleaning VM out of Tonkin delta and of re-establishing efficient honest govt. He asserted a maximum effective effort must be made within next months or delta would be lost to VM. Of 15 provinces and one "delegation" in region only the "delegation" Hoan-Long adjacent to Hanoi is completely controlled by govt. In four provinces, Nam-Dinh, Hai-Duong, Ha-Dong, and Gia-lam effective govt control extends to only 4/10 of area and in the remaining provinces only 1/5 of area is governmentally controlled. He remarked sarcastically that rather than speak of VM infiltration of delta one might say Viet Govt had infiltrated Viet Minh territory.

One of most important measures he urges is raising of village militia from present strength of 16,000 to 40,000 and increasing monthly pay from 300 piasters to 400 piasters ($20). The second measure was to increase somewhat the strength of security police and to place them under his direct command. The security police, he considered, could not be run by remote control from Saigon. At present they were merely operating in safe villages and towns, but what they must do is infiltrate and plant themselves in VM areas to obtain vital info, now lacking, of VM local plans and operations.

In separate conversation with Bartlett, MSA chief, Tri asked for complete overhaul of MSA program in north omitting any activity which did not quite directly promote the "pacification" of delta. Bartlett is going to Hanoi next week for on-the-ground review with Tri of MSA operations and programs.

Tri told me that he informed Bao Dai that unless the govt shouldered its responsibilities immed and with utmost energy, within 10 months Bao Dai might no longer be chief of state.

Tri had long talk and had left long memo with Tam (copy of which he furnished me to be forwarded shortly to Dept)[1] setting forth his financial needs and proposed reform measures. It is to be noted that memo does not specifically request that security police in Tonkin be placed directly under his command. Tri tells me however that he made this demand orally to Tam.

He "thought" that Bao Dai might now actively assume his responsibilities and set personal example but remarked that it would be unnecessary for everyone in contact Emperor continually to push and exhort him to action.

He thought that Empress should return immed and Crown Prince not later than year or two, that latter should finish his univ work in Hanoi, make friends and contacts and "Vietnamize" himself. If he remained in France several years more, he would never be accepted by people as monarch.

Tri "hoped" to be able work with Tam during next few months. Tam he said would never be really accepted by Viet people as chief of govt. He had certain virtues, however, particularly when compared with his predecessor Huu. Tam had considerable frankness and was hard efficient worker. He hoped that he did not fall prey to "delusions of grandeur" and convictions of personal irreplaceability which afflicted Huu.

HEATH

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[1] Not identified.

751G.5/12–552 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, December 5, 1952—8 p. m.

3315. Rptd info Saigon 117, London unnumbered. De Margerie[1] indicated today that uncertain military situations such as that now prevailing in Na San always caused public and parliamentary heart-searching here on Indochina problem and that at present moment this was particularly acute. There was an unusual amount of questioning as to what if anything could be done to bring about an ultimate satisfactory solution, whether France should continue struggle and if so, where. He said there was universal agreement in France on only one point: namely, that if France were to continue struggle, she could not do it "alone."

He recognized that US could not possibly make any basic decisions on such questions as this until new administration had gotten into saddle but he felt it important that US, UK and French Govts begin intensive and realistic political and military studies now with view to reaching decisions at next tripartite meeting, presumably in March or April. As indicative of type of questions to be considered, he mentioned whether Indochina was in fact essential either militarily or politically to preventing Communist domination of Southeast Asia? Could western strategic interests be adequately met by holding offshore island chain? What would be effect of French withdrawal from north and center to concentrate on holding only the south? Would it be possible to make major short-term military effort to wipe out Viet-Minh pocket between northern and central strongpoints and establish single front between them? Would there be any possibility of "borrowing" US and UK planes, carriers and naval vessels from Korea or elsewhere in connection with that or similar operations?

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[1] Roland Jacquin de Margerie, Assistant Director General for Political and Economic Affairs, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

There was no element whatever of blackmail in his discussions; it was simply expression of conviction that three govts would have to do some very serious thinking individually and collectively and face up to difficult decisions few months hence. He did express hope that tripartite staff organization could be gotten under way as quickly as possible (see Embtel 3314).[2]

DUNN

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[2] Telegram 3314 from Paris, Dec. 5, is not printed.

JCS Records, CCS .092 Asia (6-25-48), sec. 36

Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] 5 December 1952.

JCS 1992/192

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

Reference: J.C.S. 1992 series

THE PROBLEM

1. In the light of current events to evaluate the situation in Indochina.

DISCUSSION

2. See Enclosure.

CONCLUSIONS

3. The forces of Viet Minh continue to hold the initiative.

4. Present military operations in northwestern Tonkin have little strategic effect on the over-all situation in Indochina.

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[1] On Dec. 12, 1952, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted the conclusions contained in paragraphs 3 through 13 and the discussion contained in the enclosure to this document. The enclosure is not printed here.

5. The French airlift appears capable of adequately supplying the French Union Forces in Northwest Tonkin provided it is not interrupted by weather or enemy action. Even though the airlift fails a sizable portion of the forces could probably escape.

6. If the French should lose all the forces now in Northwest Tonkin the loss of personnel and equipment would be significant, although not critical.

7. The loss of Northwest Tonkin to the Communists would be of great potential propaganda value to the Viet Minh. If this loss of Northwest Tonkin should also include large numbers of French forces there would be an appreciable drop in the morale of the French Union Forces and the peoples of Indochina. Moreover, in this latter case there probably would be political repercussions in France.

8. Despite the development of the Associated States Armies no significant change in the relative strengths of the opposing forces is foreseen.

9. It is believed that the Chinese Communists will not invade Indochina during the period from now through mid-1953.

10. The outlook in Indochina through April 1953 is for a continued stalemate.

11. A French withdrawal from Indochina is not likely in the foreseeable future.

12. It appears unlikely that France will increase its present commitments to Indochina. At present United States aid to France in Indochina is not sufficient to resolve the situation.

13. Native Vietnamese forces are not capable of becoming self-sufficient in the foreseeable future, even with aid very much greater than at present available or presumably forthcoming. Without substantial French support in training and in the field and without French forces in active operations, the native armed forces cannot be expected to offer effective resistance to the Viet Minh.

RECOMMENDATION

14. That the Joint Chiefs of Staff note the conclusions contained in paragraphs 3 through 13 above and the discussion contained in the Enclosure hereto.

[Here follows the Enclosure, 18 pages of discussion.]

751G.5/12–852 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, December 8, 1952—6 p. m.

3347. Rptd info Saigon 119. Saigon tel 1149, Dec 5 (Paris 182). In view previous Fr aversion to steps related to foreign "participation" in Indochina conflict under existing circumstances, Emb somewhat surprised at Fr request for US maintenance personnel in Indochina even on temporary basis. We wonder whether this question has been given full consideration in Paris as to whether Fr Govt wld not prefer have planes flown to Clark Field for such work.

If favorable action likely for provision such US personnel in Indochina, Emb recommends it be authorized discuss matter with FonOff and/or Min Assoc States prior final decision in Wash.[1]

DUNN

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[1] Telegram 1174 from Saigon, Dec. 9, repeated to Paris as telegram 183, read as follows: "In view extreme urgency of problem maintenance planes, we feel it most unwise for Embassy Paris to raise question with French. In past US milit mechanics have come to Indochina for short stays to help in repair of planes. If French have any questions regarding presence of such American military personnel in Indochina, it is up to French to bring up subject.

"We believe that Embassy Saigon is appropriate channel for discussion with the French and that intervention by Embassy Paris might give rise most unfortunate delay." (751G.5/12–952)

751G.5/12–1152 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, December 11, 1952—9 a. m.

1179. Rptd info Paris 184, London 17. We can appreciate that current difficult military situation in which French find themselves in North Vietnam gives rise to heart searchings mentioned by De Margerie (Paris tel 3315, Dec 5 to Dept rptd Saigon) which are susceptible to provoke comments with pessimistic overtones.

We believe, however, that it is dangerous for French to even toy with idea that strategic interest cld be met by holding only South Vietnam or in any way cutting commitments in IC. Not only is Tonkin key to SEA from military point of view, but withdrawal to South Vietnam wld be politically disastrous. Rumors to effect French prepared abandon north which considered region of virulent nationalism and of secondary economic importance to French, to hold south where bulk of French wealth located, has been one of most persistent rumors bruited by Viets. Such an alleged plan has often been linked with rumors of French negotiations with Commies for settlement which wld leave French considerable measure of control in south. Withdrawal wld go long way to reinforcing Vietnamese suspicions of essential trickiness of French policy.

We are also somewhat concerned over French readiness to assert they struggling "alone" in IC and their tendency to pose question of IC as primarily one for solution through French, British, US joint action. This approach tends to overlook substantial contribution US is making and role which peoples Associated States must play in arriving at solution.

At present there is urgent need to get more active participation of Vietnamese in affairs their country and to get more Vietnamese manpower into the fight. General Alessandri has been working on plan to increase number of Vietnamese under arms (Embtel 1086, Nov 26);[1] plan which has been approved in principle by Letourneau and Salan. General Trapnell has been thinking along same lines and had evolved plan somewhat along lines that formulated by General Alessandri.[2] General Hinh in conversation with US ARMA stressed urgency developing native forces and outlined plan therefor. One of main objectives Governor Tri is development and expansion of militia in North Vietnam (Embtel 1153, Dec 5).

At this time when difficulties of military campaign may induce pessimism among French and tendency to resort to US for help we suggest that endeavour on our part to channel French and Viet attention to constructive programs designed to utilize Viet potential and to make Viet shoulder their share of responsibility wld be more to point. Programs for increasing Viet armed forces which raise such ancillary problems as psychological warfare for development of proper morale in such forces, increase of taxation to support increased army and the betterment of govt administration, provide fertile field for joint efforts by France, ourselves and Associated States govts.

HEATH

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[1] Not printed.

[2] The views of General Trapnell are contained in a letter he transmitted to Gen. J. Lawton Collins, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, on Dec. 20. For text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 2–3.

751G.5/12–1252 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, December 12, 1952—4 p. m.

1190. Rptd info Paris 187. Eyes only for Allison. ReDeptel 1201 Dec 10, rptd Paris 3305.[1] Gen Hewitt (see mytel 1187 Dec 12),[2] after interviews with Fr Secy of State for Aviation Montel and Gen Chassin Commander FAF IC, and study plane maintenance problem, has sent tel to Commandant [*Commanding*] Gen FEAF Japan stating that in view heavy demands faced by Fr maintenance personnel, we must send Amer maintenance personnel for balance of period of loan to Fr of US transport planes if we expect eventually return of these planes (which are only loaned to French until end Jan next). He has recommended assignment to IC of mobile maintenance detachment 60 persons which wld provide for major inspection and battle repairs for one squadron of 31 planes, which wld include 21 US transports loaned to French.[3]

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[1] In telegram 1201 to Saigon, Dec. 10, Assistant Secretary of State Allison informed Ambassador Heath that the initial reaction of the Department of the Air Force to the proposal for participation in the maintenance of French aircraft was unfavorable. It was thought that such participation would involve a significant change of policy and should be undertaken only as the result of a high-level decision which took into account all implications. (751G.5/12–552)

[2] Telegram 1187 from Saigon, Dec. 12, repeated to Paris for information as telegram 186, read as follows: "Brigadier General [Albert G.] Hewitt in charge of maintenance FEAF, arrived in Saigon late yesterday to study overhaul needs of French transport planes. He said that from preliminary observation it was possible and he wld recommend assignment of mobile repair group to Indochina provided there were no policy objections.

"Montel, French Secretary of State for Aviation, arrived today. I suggested to General Hewitt that he consult with both Montel and French Air Force Commander Gen Chassin." (751G.5/12–1252)

Montel indicated to Hewitt he wld appreciate Def and State decision on question US despatching maintenance personnel prior his scheduled departure from IC Dec 21.

From talk last night with Hewitt and Col Whisner, acting chief MAAG (Gen Trapnell on trip to Formosa) it is apparent that Fr maintenance facilities are now taxed to point where standard maintenance provided is dangerously below that which Amer Air Force deems adequate. Although 100 technicians arriving from France next week, 60 are replacements for equal number leaving on rotation.

Hewitt favors sending US technicians to IC rather than repairing transports at Clark Field for long over-water flight unsafe for worn and damaged aircraft and trip to and return from Philippines wld cut into over-all flying hours planes now requiring 50-hour and 100-hour overhauls.

This sending of technicians to IC is not an innovation in our relationship to IC conflict. US Air Force mechanics were sent to IC several weeks ago to repair planes damaged by typhoon; our MAAG mission which includes delivery and instruction in use of weapons is scarcely less involvement than repair of planes.

Shld requirement for transport aircraft remain at present high level or increase, which is quite probable, Fr wld face most critical situation. It is my opinion that our stake in this area is too important for us to jeopardize the tremendous effort we have already made through failure to follow through on action which seems to be clearly called for in the present circumstances and which does not seem to me to be much more than we have already done.

It is perhaps pertinent to recall that during Letourneau conversations last June, Def was interested in sending Amer training mission to expand Vietnamese officer corps to command in this war. This proposal was objected to by Dept official (and myself) not because it wld mean further involvement but on the grounds that officer training was a Fr responsibility and language difficulties were involved. If we can consider training men for combat in actual war, we shld be able to send mechanics to repair our own planes, which are to be returned to us in good condition after expiration of a short loan period.[4]

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[3] Telegram 1197 from Saigon, Dec. 13, repeated to Paris as telegram 189, read as follows: "I have learned that General Hewitt, after visit to Nha Trang, has revised his estimate and believes that detachment of 25 or 30 AF mechanics with a weekly air support run from Clark Air Field base direct to Nha Trang will be sufficient to handle C-47 overhauls." (751G.5/12-1352)

HEATH

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[4] In telegram 1286 to Saigon (also sent to Paris as telegram 3523), Dec. 22, Assistant Secretary Allison stated the following to Ambassadors Heath and Dunn: "Dept concurs in US participation maintenance C–47s by 25–30 USAF personnel at Nha Trang on temporary loan basis. Defense notified and has taken similar position.

"Defense has directed FEACOM to undertake such support and is informing MAAG Saigon.

"Defense additionally queries MAAG French intentions on possibility retention mechanics due rotation." (751G.5/12–1352)

790.00/12–1552 : Telegram

The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Gifford) to the Department of State

SECRET LONDON, December 15, 1952—6 p. m.

3336. Rptd info Paris 905. Embtel 3312, Dec 13.[1] Following is abbreviated text Bukit Serene conference[2] conclusions and recommendations IC:

1. Conference reviewed military situation in light present fighting and plan gradually replace Fr with Vietnam forces over two-year period.

2. Military situation may develop badly. Fr have lost initiative northern areas outside delta. Present tactical conception is bring enemy to battle against prepared defenses, but Fr have inadequate reserves achieve success.

3. If Nasan lost political and military consequences will be serious. Fr forces there and in Lai Chau wld experience great difficulty in regaining base. Thai country wld be lost and Laos open to invasion. If Nasan held it likely only at great cost, and important element Fr forces may remain tied up in area where they have little freedom of maneuver. Some evidence Viet Minh intention is by-pass delta and aim for Laos and Cambodia. Thai PriMin exhibiting nervousness.

4. Fr undoubtedly require reinforcements restore situation. Not easy assess what strength such reinforcements shld be, but perhaps one division. Increase in air effort shld also be valuable.

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[1] Not printed.

[2] A conference of British diplomatic, colonial, and military officials in the Far East was held in early December at Bukit Serene, Malaya, under the chairmanship of Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner General for the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia.

5. In long term, understanding is Fr intend begin withdrawal forces to Europe beginning early 1953 and ending late 1954 to extent of having dissolved IC command and withdrawn all but garrison forces for Fr Union defense. We must face prospect that in two years Vietnamese will have, broadly speaking, face Viet Minh by themselves. Little reason to suppose they can do this effectively unless meanwhile Viet Minh suffer military disaster permanently weakening their forces.

6. Evident both in short and long term urgent need for reinforcement under present circumstances, such reinforcement can only be French. Conference fully conscious of great difficulties involved, particularly Fr preoccupation with Europe. Bukit Serene concerned with security of SEA and holding IC against Commies. It therefore, of highest importance reinforce troops IC and everything be done remove obstacle in way such course.

GIFFORD

751G.00/12-1552

Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, December 15, 1952.]

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

During the past few weeks there has been little change in the military situation. Some 10,000 French Union troops are still beleaguered at Na San but enemy pressure is light and there have been no recent heavy attacks. The French airlift is functioning normally. We are completing arrangements to expedite deliveries of certain much needed planes and also to arrange for maintenance of transport planes which have been under unexpectedly heavy use. Nevertheless, the initiative appears to remain with the enemy instead of with our side as we had hoped when this year's campaign opened. The prospects for any real military progress are dim. There are in addition reports of enemy movements toward Laos. These, taken in conjunction with reported Communist activities in Thailand, open disagreeable possibilities which we are carefully investigating.

The Vietnamese Government is showing increasing political vitality. The new Governor of North Vietnam is taking energetic means to clean up the administration. He has proposed a substantial increase in

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[1] A copy of this memorandum was transmitted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, to John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, with a brief covering note dated Dec. 17, which indicated that the memorandum had been prepared for Under Secretary David K. E. Bruce. (PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Bonsal Memos")

Home Guards and there is some evidence that the French are abandoning their previous negative attitude toward arming any but professional soldiers. Prime Minister Tam is proceeding with a project, not yet publicly announced, to hold local elections where possible at the end of January 1953.

Proposals for an increase of 40 battalions in the National Army have been advanced by General Alessandri who is Bao Dai's military adviser. These plans have been favorably reported on by General Salan. There is general agreement as to the necessity for increasing the armed forces available on the Franco-Vietnamese side if military progress is to be made.

It has become increasingly clear in recent weeks that a careful reexamination of the Indochina situation is called for. On the one hand, the prospects of an early defeat of the Vietminh have become dimmer. On the other, the French will probably indicate to the Secretary in Paris [2] that they do not feel able to continue to bear their present share of the burden in Indochina. There is rising uneasiness in French governmental and political circles.

Such discussions as we have had with the Pentagon indicate that we have no clear idea of French views as to the military situation. There is a serious gap in our current information. The existing assumption that the French would, at the same time that they were creating indigenous Vietnamese forces and gradually diminishing their own forces, be able to destroy or at least seriously reduce the potential of the enemy is unsupported by currently available information, nor is it by any means clear that the indigenous Vietnamese forces being created would be able alone to maintain even the unsatisfactory present stalemate.

The Secretary at Paris can obviously make no commitments regarding future American aid. It has, however, been suggested to him that he reiterate our appreciation of what the Franco-Vietnamese forces are doing in this fight against Communist aggression in Indochina and that he state his belief in the necessity for a thorough re-examination of the current and prospective military, political and economic situation in order that the new administration in Washington may have a firm base on which to formulate decisions. If Mr. Schuman agrees the Secretary would express his willingness to explore the possibility of setting up a working level group to meet with a similar French group for this purpose.

There is attached a copy of London's telegram No. 3336 of December 15 [3] giving conclusions and recommendations regarding Indochina reached at a conference of British representatives in Southeast Asia held under the chairmanship of Malcolm MacDonald. FE finds this analysis to run very close to the lines of its own thinking. Ambassador Heath has been asked for his comments thereon.[4]

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[2] Secretary of State Acheson attended the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Dec. 15–18.

[3] *Supra.*

The Secretary in Paris will also be approached by the French regarding the implementation of a recommendation by the recent Five-Power Military Conference for the establishment of a liaison staff organization for Southeast Asia. The Secretary will be able to reply along lines which, while not entirely responsive to the French request for an immediate meeting of representatives of the five Commanders in the area, will, we hope, indicate to them a willingness on our part to set up liaison facilities.

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[4] Comments by Ambassador Heath are contained in telegram 1248 from Saigon, Dec. 20, p. 325.

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 129

United States Summary of Actions at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Paris, December 15–18, 1952[1]

[Extract]

SECRET

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In closed session the Council turned to agenda item "Exchange of Views on Political Matters of Common Concern" with Schuman first on the list to discuss Indochina. He opened by referring to repercussions of the Indochina war on Council affairs, not only strategically but in relation to France's NATO effort and her role vis-à-vis Germany as well as EDC. Before asking Letourneau, Minister for Associated States, to speak on the present situation, Schuman said the French Government desires a clear conclusion to be drawn from the facts now laid before the Council and for help as far as possible to the French in carrying her heavy burden.

Letourneau gave an excellent summary of the weight of the French effort over seven years which included a persuasive presentation of the extent to which the three Associated States are exercising sovereignty to a degree comparable, he asserted, to that of members of the British Commonwealth. He gave a figure of 175,000 troops of French and territories of French Union with 8,000 French officers and French noncoms; with dead, missing and wounded set at 90,000 for French Legionnaires, African and North African troops from 1945 to October 1952. The French financial effort in the same period set at 1,547 billion francs of 1950 value. He noted that Vietnam in the past two years had built its army to 53 battalions, plus 28,000 national guard and 5,000 supplementifs. 67 regular battalions plus a small coastal and river navy for Vietnam are planned in 1953. Comparable figures for Cambodia and Laos were given as 16,000 and 12,000 respectively. He recalled that 33 countries have recognized the Associated States and that only the Soviets vetoed their admission to the UN.

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[1] The greater part of the discussion on Indochina summarized here occurred at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council on Dec. 16. The last paragraph of this extract summarizes that portion of the meeting of Dec. 17 which concerned Indochina. The NATO summary records of the two meetings are located in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 129. For additional documentation on this session of the North Atlantic Council, see volume v.

Letourneau stated that French resistance to aggression in Indochina has been based on the realization: (1) if she refused to make this effort the Associated States would lose their independence as soon as the expeditionary force left; and (2) if Indochina fell, the balance in Asia would be upset and the problem of the defense of Europe greatly changed. He emphasized that Korea and Indochina were aspects of the same fight against the same central adversary and that any negotiated settlements in Korea should include settlement of Indochina. He acknowledged "generous and considerable aid" from the U.S., representing 33 percent of expenditures this year, and equipment for the Vietnam army but stated this may well be insufficient in light of the weight of the burden. Letourneau closed by asking the western powers to recognize the tremendous importance of the fight the French are making in Indochina and the importance of supporting her effort.

The Chairman [2] thanked the French delegate for his information and paid tribute to the heavy burden the French are carrying.

The Portuguese then paid similar tribute and reminded the Council that Portugal herself is bearing a heavy burden in exposed Macao, described as the "oldest European stronghold in China."

The U.K. agreed the French are defending an important bastion against the Communists and emphasized the necessity for seeing the world problem as a whole which U.K. responsibilities in Malaya, Korea, Hong Kong, the Middle East, and Europe require. He [3] concluded by stating the U.K. is giving France what it could and that any request from France would be sympathetically considered within U.K. resources which necessarily were limited.

After a brief tribute to French gallantry by Italy, the Chairman stated the public should know the Council had discussed Indochina and asked whether the Council desired to pass a resolution or merely include the fact in the communiqué.[4]

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[2] Ole Bjørn Kraft, Foreign Minister of Denmark.

[3] Reference is to Anthony Eden, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

[4] The Final Communiqué, issued on Dec. 18, noted that the Council had "paid particular attention to the struggle in Indo-China." For text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, Jan. 5, 1953, pp. 3–4.

Secretary Acheson made a laudatory statement regarding the French struggle in Indochina, saying the French effort there is in the interest of all of the free world. The U.S. expects to continue to help and support the French effort to the best of its ability. The U.S. then introduced and read a resolution on Indochina (previously agreed to by the UK, French and U.S. delegations) and moved its adoption. Italy was in entire agreement with the purpose of the resolution but expressed some concern lest such a resolution change the legal obligations under NAT which might create problems with NATO Parliaments. Norway, France and Canada proposed that a minimum of amendments be adopted and the resolution (C–M (52) 140)[5] was approved. Schuman then made a speech of thanks pointing out that France was convinced it is fulfilling its duty not only in its own interest but for the entire free world. The Council agreed to release the resolution immediately to press.

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[5] The resolution read as follows:

"*The North Atlantic Council*

"*Recognizes* that resistance to direct or indirect aggression in any part of the world is an essential contribution to the common security of the free world;

"*Having been* informed at its meeting in Paris on the 16th December of the latest developments in the military and political situation in Indo-China;

"*Expresses* its wholehearted admiration for the valiant and long continued struggle by the French forces and the armies of the Associated States against Communist aggression; and

"*Acknowledges* that the resistance of the free nations in South-East Asia as in Korea is in fullest harmony with the aims and ideals of the Atlantic Community;

"*And therefore agrees* that the campaign waged by the French Union forces in Indo-China deserves continuing support from the NATO governments." (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 129)

751G.5/12–1852: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 18, 1952—8 p. m.

1235. Rptd info Paris 192, Hanoi unnumbered. Cheysson, Fr dipl off whom Tam has chosen as polit counselor, returned yesterday from Paris. During Tam's stay France Cheysson assisted him with his confs and speeches and after Tam's departure conferred with Fr Min, polit personalities and Fr press. Cheysson came see me today and stated that:

1. There was no doubt that Fr budget IC wld be voted.

2. There was general agreement with Auriol, Pleven and officials of the Mins concerned that VN Natl Army must be increased by 30 to 40 battalions and that supplementary appropriations wld be voted during 1953, if necessary, to accomplish that increase, provided additional contributions were forthcoming from VN and US.

3. There was also general agreement that special milit effort wld be made clean up (next year) South VN, including Cochin China and central part of Central VN, of VM by middle 1953, with aim that by end of year only VN units completely VN officered wld be in control of area, Fr Union Forces being sent to north.

Cheysson said that there was general agreement re the necessity of both increasing VN Natl Army and cleaning up South VN, but that final agreement had not yet been reached with Fr High Command IC and Bao Dai.

Comment: Cleaning up South VN without delay is one Tam's favorite projects. Salan said to me five months ago that, with any luck, he shld be able overcome organized Am [*VM*] milit resistance in south by end of 1953. Tam insists that it must be done earlier. My own view here is that it is more urgent clean up northern delta and that any mop-up operations in south should not take troops away or detract from milit operations in north.

4. It was almost certain that Letourneau will be replaced within next three months. Cheysson said there was general dissatisfaction with Letourneau's being both Min for AS and High Commissioner. Cheysson refused speculate respecting the new High Comm, who, he said, wld have title of commissioner [garble]. He remarked that if RPF participated in present or a successor govt, someone, possibly General Koenig,[1] favored by RPF wld be chosen.

5. In few weeks, he felt, the present system of Fr representation in IC wld be changed. A commissioner general wld be named, with High Comms in each of three AS.

6. There was great deal criticism of and dissatisfaction with General Salan in Paris and distinct possibility that he might be replaced. Dismissal Gen Salan wld be unjust, Cheysson said, because he was thoroughly capable commander, but the feeling was general that the fall of Nghia Lo and failure to make progress in north were due to defective command. The real reason for latter was, of course, that Salan did not have sufficient reserve striking force.

Cheysson said that Tam and DefMin Tri had made very good impression in Paris. Cheysson was little worried that Bao Dai's entourage was intriguing against Tam and asked my opinion on this point. I remarked that Bao Dai had told Tam that he still enjoyed his confidence and had agreed let Tam get rid of Giao and other elements of dissension or weakness in Cab. I also remarked that apparently Tam had been given permission hold local elections, altho Nguyen De, Bao Dai's Cab director, had told me that he thought holding elections at this time was unwise. Cheysson said he understood that

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[1] General of the Army Pierre Koenig, a member of the French National Assembly; a prominent Free French military commander during World War II.

Bao Dai was against elections and Tam's insistence on them was bold and, perhaps, rather dangerous step. If Tam were allowed carry on from local elections to elections of Natl Assembly, the authority and role of Bao Dai wld be inevitably reduced. Cheysson concluded by saying that he thought it essential for progress in VN that Tam retain the premiership for some time to come.

HEATH

751G.00/12–2252

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] December 22, 1952.

INDOCHINA

On Thursday afternoon, December 18, 1952, in Paris, Mr. Schuman asked Mr. Eden and me to meet him alone at the Quai D'Orsay at 7:00 o'clock. We met in Mr. Schuman's office. He had present Mr. Letourneau, an interpreter, and an official of the Foreign Office to take notes. Mr. Schuman made a short introduction and Mr. Letourneau then took over. He spoke for about three-quarters of an hour, but his three points may be summed up as follows:

1. *Mr. Letourneau's Idea of the Viet Minh Strategy for the Coming Winter.*

He said that the French believed that the attack on NaSan and the heavy concentrations in that area indicated that the Viet Minh intended this year to conduct an intensive campaign in the Thai country and against Laos for the purpose of overrunning the latter area. He believed that they intended to do this because they believe, first, that it is the most difficult part of Indochina for the French to defend on account of the long distances, difficult communications, small local forces for resistance. Second, it would open a new frontier with China and, most importantly, it would open a considerable frontier with Thailand. He believed that the Viet Minh believed that the reduction of Laos would accomplish a considerable part of their purposes in Indochina and exert strong pressure against Thailand without having to come to grips with the French Union Forces in the Hanoi Delta. This analysis led to his second point.

2. *French Plans for Raising Troops.*

The French had two plans for raising considerable numbers of lightly armed troops for the purpose of relieving combat divisions of security duties and allowing a concentration of forces to take part in offensive operations against the Viet Minh in the Thai country. The first plan was to raise what he described as militia regiments of between forty and sixty thousand men, who would be lightly armed and would require a number of French officers and NCO's.

The second plan, as I recall it, was very much the same, except that the forces would be sort of auxiliary units to the regular Viet Nam army. Whichever line of development they choose would raise, so far as we are concerned, the same questions—which are additional equipment, arms, general assistance. He wanted urgently to discuss this with us.

3. *Development of Recommendations Made by the Five-Power Conference.*[1]

He discussed at some length the recommendations of the Five-Power Conference to set up some sort of a liaison group, chiefly stressing the fact that the French regarded the recommendations as having considerable binding force.

As the hour was growing late and I had only a short time to get to the plane, I asked if I could make a brief statement and leave. I said the following:

I had no comments on the military strategy situation, which was obviously for others to consider.

On point 2 we would be very glad to send a working party after Christmas to Paris consisting of a State Department official, who would probably be Mr. Bonsal, a military officer, and an officer from Mr. Harriman's outfit, all of whom would sit down with the French and develop full information regarding the situation in Indochina. I said that we were very dissatisfied with the information which we had, which was spotty, incomplete, and not current. We thought that General Trapnell was not getting much, if any, information, outside of supply matters. I urged Mr. Letourneau to take some steps to remedy this situation. The important thing, however, was to have a thorough and quick review so that we would know what the situation was and what we were doing if, as, and when we took any further steps. Mr. Letourneau and Mr. Schuman greeted this suggestion with enthusiasm and suggested that the mission might go to Saigon where the information was. I said that I was very firm about the fact that the mission was going to go where Mr. Letourneau was because I wanted him present to instruct people under his authority to give us the information, so that we would not be struggling with inferior officers without him present. I said that if he was in Saigon, we would send the mission to Saigon. If he was not, we would either not send it or send it to Paris. He agreed to this and said that he would let us know promptly where he would be. The next move is up to him.

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[1] Reference is to the conference of military representatives held in Washington, Oct. 6–17, which is described in the editorial note on p. 266.

On the third point, I said that instructions had been issued to Admiral Radford to detail an officer who would confer with the British and French officer and to set up a liaison group. I wanted it clearly understood that what Admiral Radford would discuss was the sort of liaison group which would operate under field conditions. We did not want a committee; we did not want secretaries; and we did not want minutes. All that was necessary was to have competent officers, who would exchange full information, so that the commanders of all three forces would be in touch and would be informed. I gathered from him that this was the sort of arrangement which he had in mind, although he did not commit himself in any detail. However, he said that what he contemplated in the first instance was a meeting of the commanders to work out the arrangements. Mr. Eden intervened to say that General Harding[2] had instructed the British commander in Southeast Asia to meet at any agreed point. I said that this was a new idea to me and that I did not altogether see why Admiral Radford, who had just been in the Far East, should return there when some deputy might be adequate. However, I was not in a position to speak further on the subject, except that I could not commit Admiral Radford in person. I would report this suggestion to Washington and would then communicate with the Foreign Office as to whether Admiral Radford himself would be willing to meet or would send one of his staff officers.

The meeting then closed, apparently with general satisfaction.

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[2] Gen. Sir John Harding, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

790.00/12–2052 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 20, 1952—4 p. m.

1248. Rptd info Paris unn, Hanoi unn. Fol is my comment on numbered parts of abbreviated text "Bukit Serene conference" conclusions and recommendations transmitted Deptel 1250, Dec. 17.[1]

2. It is true that Fr have for time being lost initiative northern areas outside delta, but I do not believe it is likely that gen situation will "develop badly." The original plan for the present campaign season was not alone to bring enemy against prepared defense in Tonkin delta, but also to take advantage increased capacity to drop parachute troops obtained by loan 29 Fr and 21 Amer C–47s to force enemy units outside delta perimeter to battle against parachute battalions dropped in their rear flank and motorized mobile groups thrust-

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[1] In telegram 1250 to Saigon, Dec. 17, the Department of State transmitted the text of telegram 3336 from London, Dec. 15, which is printed on p. 316.

ing out from delta. The loss of Nghia Lo faced French with problem of abandoning Thai country or digging in at Na San, the only good point in area which cld be manned and supplied by airlift. It was decided to try hold Thai country and Na San defenses were quickly built up to resist mass VM attack. In fact, VM attacks were bloodily repulsed Nov 24, Dec 1 and 2. Linares' estimates of 3,000 VM dead and 6,000 casualties in operations from Nghia Lo to the unsuccessful assaults on Na San may be somewhat high, but it is certain that VM losses relatively heavy. Na San now is so competently and heavily fortified that under present conditions VM cannot take it and it is unlikely will now attack it. Of course, decision hold Na San ties down ten of best battalions of Fr mobile reserves. On other hand, operation also tying division or thereabouts of VM troops on guard against sorties or evacuation from Na San. If VM reduces this watching force in order strengthen present movements against delta, they wld risk sorties from Na San against the guarding force, which aided by Fr air monopoly might succeed in causing severe losses to them—or Fr cld reduce Na San garrison which cld always be restrengthened. I do not believe that Fr reserves inadequate to "achieve success" in Na San operation, altho it is now clear that to achieve any early decisive victories against total VM forces in north, Fr-Viet forces must be considerably and rapidly increased.

3. It is, of course, true that, if Na San were lost, the polit and mil consequences wld be serious, but not fatal. The Thai country wld be lost and Laos open to invasion. It is not clear what is meant by statement that, if Na San is held, it wld likely be only at great cost. It is quite unlikely that holding Na San wld result in any heavy casualties for Fr-Viet forces. It is true that airlift to Na San imposes cost in gas, mechanical depreciation French transport planes. French must increase aviation maintenance crews and US shld and can contribute to solution this problem. It is also true that important element Fr forces may remain tied up in area, but it also ties down there VM troops which will have some supply difficulties.

4. There is no question but that Fr require reinforcements. Merely to restore situation, one division shld be at least sufficient, since it wld compensate the battalions now garrisoned Na San. If Fr had had two extra divisions (see Joint Weeka 47, Nov. 22 [*23*],[2] they wld not have had to break off their thrust at Phu Tho. They wld have remained in that area athwart VM supply lines and forces VM to attack against superior fire, possibly resulting in quite decisive VM defeat. There is no question but that an increase in air effort, which means

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[2] Joint Weeka 47, Nov. 23, containing a detailed account of military operations, is not printed. (751G.00(W)/11–2352)

more planes and crews, wld be extremely valuable. With more pilots and maintenance crews, the Fr cld almost double effectiveness of their present air fleet.

5. It is not our understanding there is any firm Fr governmental decision withdraw Fr Union forces in late 1954 to extent of dissolving Indochina command and withdrawal all but garrison forces for Fr Union def. I do not know where the Bukit conf got that idea. Some Viet units will be passed to Viet Natl Army, but we know of no intention effect any important reduction in Fr Union forces in 1953 (only two battalions, not of first quality, slated to be withdrawn according most recent info available to Emb). As far as I know, no statement or decision has been made to turn supreme command over to Viet in 1954, nor has any such advance request been estimated by Viet govt. At present latter is thinking only of obtaining autonomous area commands of Viet forces but always under Fr High Command. Bao Dai and DefMin and Viet Chief of Staff quite thoroughly realize that Fr Union forces and Fr High Command are necessary as long as chance of Chi invasion persists. Viet army by mid-1954 will consist almost entirely of infantry with inadequate armor and artillery, practically no aviation or naval forces, and thus completely unprepared to withstand modern Chi army, or probably even modernized VM army if latter equipped with armor, artillery, and aviation.

It is true that in the short term, if by that is meant few months, reinforcements cld only be supplied by France but over a somewhat longer period the troops can be supplied by the Viets, provided Fr lend field grade offs and a stiffening of Fr NCOs. Both Fr and Viets are now thinking of an additional increase of Viet Natl Army by thirty to forty thousand men during next twelve months or so (over and above the 13 new battalions already scheduled) with part of increase ready for action in second half 1953. In addition, Gov Tri in north desires to increase local militia from 24,000 to 40,000 and this has been agreed to in principle by Fr HICOM. The situation wld be more than restored and indeed decisively altered if the Fr cld send two additional divisions now, taking them back when substantial part of the thirty or forty thousand additional Viet troops now being considered wld be ready for action. It is realized, of course, this wld involve conflict with present Fr official opinion and temporary non-fulfillment of Fr requirements under NATO, but NATO has recently passed res indicating that maintenance of Fr effort in Indochina is in line with NATO aims. The Fr cld supply a division or two if they wld abolish their prohibition against ordering Fr conscripts to serve abroad. Our draftees serve in Korea and there is no valid argument against Fr conscripts serving in Indochina. The foregoing has been shown to Gen

Trapnell and has his general approval, and to service attachés who are still studying situation.

HEATH

751G.5/12–2252 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 22, 1952—7 p. m.

1264. Rptd info Paris 193, Hanoi unn. Emb strongly approves *New York Times* editorial "NATO and Indochina" of Dec 19, believing it presents excellent summary IC significance in international struggle against Communism.

Emb also agrees essential theme Alsop Brothers [1] article, "war that must be won", appearing *Washington Post* Dec 19, that two more Fr divisions and increased Amer aid wld tip balance in favor Franco-Vietnamese side. Mytel 1248 of Dec 20 shows desirability despatch additional divisions, at temporary expense Fr NATO effort.

However, Emb takes exception to Alsops statement that, as part alleged Eisenhower program to turn tide decisively against Viet Minh, Fr are to make "unequivocal offer independence to IC within specific time limit" and reach pol settlement giving IC "stable, independent" govt. Suggest Dept may wish contact Alsops informally to point out Vietnam granted Sovereign status by basic accords with Fr March 8, 1949, recognized as independent state by 33 nations, and wld today be member UN but for inevitable Soviet veto.

There are many intelligent supporters of plan ask Fr make deadline statement on withdrawal Fr expeditionary force at end hostilities, in order try bring moderate "attentistes" down off fence, but this far cry from offer "independence" which Vietnamese have actually possessed for three and one half years. Fr retain supreme mil command and such functions as considered necessary to successfully conduct war, and also have extensive economic privileges under terms France-Vietnamese agreements, which, however do not detract from fundamental fact independence by criteria international law. That Fr has no idea moving backwards is evidenced by Fr official statements, a test being that of Letourneau in current Fr National Assembly debate to effect there no question an attempt "reconstitute disguised protectorate". (See Paris 3602, Dec 20 to Dept.) [2]

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[1] Joseph and Stewart Alsop, author-journalists.

[2] Telegram 3602 from Paris, Dec. 20, not printed, reported on the debate which occurred in the National Assembly on the evening of Dec. 19 regarding the military budget for Indochina. (751.21/12–2052) That session is described in telegram 3653 from Paris, Dec. 24, p. 330.

Alsops wld do well to read *New York Times* editorial appearing simultaneously their article for clear declaration that what is being defended in Vietnam is not Fr colonial rule but chance of Vietnamese people be free. It extremely important that journalists with wide following of Alsops know true state affairs IC.[3]

HEATH

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[3] On Dec. 29, Charlton Ogburn, Regional Planning Adviser in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, addressed a memorandum to Assistant Secretary John M. Allison, titled "Propaganda in Reporting." The memorandum read in part as follows:

"In times of ideological conflict, government officials are subject to more than ordinary pressure to conform in their expression of views to what is acceptable. Expressions of opinion that could be considered heretical are likely to be sedulously avoided. Thus, at the very time when it stands in greatest need of objective reporting by its officials, a government is likely to be propagandized with fashionable opinions. The consequences are apt to be serious. Accordingly, I believe we ought to be on the alert to resist such tendencies in ourselves. In the circumstances of today, these tendencies are certain to be present."

One example cited by Ogburn in support of his argument was the following:

"Ambassador Heath, in Saigon's Telegram No. 1264 of December 22, takes the Alsops to task for ascribing to the new Administration an intention to demand that France make an 'unequivocal offer of independence to Indochina with a specific time limit.' He asserts that Vietnam achieved independence under the Accords of March 8, 1949. That is not true, and Ambassador Heath must know it is not true. It may be sound policy for us to act publicly as if it were true, but that is quite different from asserting it among ourselves under a confidential classification." (751G.5/12-2252)

751G.5/12-2352 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 23, 1952—4 p. m.

1270. Rptd info Paris 195, Hanoi unnumbered. I spoke with both Gautier, acting HIGHCOM and Offroy diplomatic counselor, re general military situation in the north and Laos. Both, and particularly Offroy, said that the situation was not alarming. Offroy said that French information was that Viet Minh had abandoned idea of attacking Luang Prabang and latest news did not indicate any firm Viet Minh decision to attack Lai Chau. There was a distinct possibility however, that the Viet Minh would attack Samneua.

Both Gautier and Offroy agreed that if French could promptly despatch two additional divisions the situation would be definitely altered in favor of the Franco-Viet Forces. Both remarked that such a proposition would conflict with commitments under NATO, prevailing French opinion and necessitate legislative action to allow French conscripts to serve abroad but Offroy thought it might be done if the US were able to offer "compensatory arrangements" which he did not attempt to describe.

Gautier said there was now general agreement, as indicated by Letourneau in his exposé before the National Assembly,[1] that the Vietnamese National Army must be promptly and considerably enlarged over present schedules. He felt that Governor Tri's idea of increasing village militia was also sound. As soon as Letourneau returned, probably not until after the first of the year, there would be a defense council meeting with Bao Dai, General Salan and Defense Minister Tri and General Hinh to discuss amount and rate of increase, financing and equipment of new battalions. It would take, of course something like a year to equip, train and officer any considerable increase in national army units.

Comment: Gautier's and Offroy's estimate of situation in Laos and the Thailand [*Thai*] country is slightly more optimistic than estimates of other observers.

HEATH

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[1] The National Assembly debate on Indochina of Dec. 19 is discussed in telegram 3653 from Paris, Dec. 24, *infra*.

751.21/12–2452 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, December 24, 1952—1 p. m.

3653. Repeated information Saigon 138, London unnumbered. Embtel 3602, December 20 (Saigon 134, London Unnumbered).[1] In commenting on National Assembly debate re Indochina budget Roux tells us that although budget approval not in question Letourneau did not have easy time during debate.[2] Roux believes NATO resolution on Indochina made Letourneau's task much less difficult but says there was evidence of malaise among his interpellators.

While National Assembly had earlier voted to refuse consider Ministry Associated States civil budget prior full debate on Indochina policy (Embtel 3471, December 14),[1] debate just ended was not considered full scale debate on Indochina policy and *rapporteur* for national defense committee asked on behalf his committee during debate that closed debate on Indochina be held during January to permit government, especially president council, to inform Assembly of its intentions and plans. Letourneau ended night session midnight December 19 without reference to such future debate and with statement he would present conclusion of his observations when budget debate resumed. Time for resumption debate left for decision by conference of committee chairmen on agenda but Pinay Cabinet crisis ensued before debate Indochina budget resumed.[3]

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[1] Not printed.

[2] For the record of the debate on the military budget for Indochina which occurred in the National Assembly on Dec. 19, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1952, Débats*, pp. 6659–6672.

Malaise of Deputies during debate on Indochina seen in frequent references to possibility of negotiations, although for most part view was expressed such negotiations not possible with Ho-Chi-Minh but should be undertaken with Communist China or with USSR. Letourneau's statements showed him firmly opposed negotiations with Ho, against internationalization of conflict and in favor "only course open to France"—to continue effort while endeavoring obtain lightening of financial burden through aid from Allies and easing of military burden through building up of national armies. He stressed that chief difficulty for France in latter task was question of cadres.

Letourneau explained in general terms revamping French administrative structure in Indochina to adapt it to its new role: Three High Commissioners for three Associated States, cultural assistance mission and economic and technical assistance mission. Answering concern of Indochina friends re possible eventual resurrection of some Indochina federation, Letourneau said powers High Commissioner Indochina were to be transferred to three High Commissioners to Associated States in such ways that Commanding General would be there only as representative of general interests of French Union and might be later person representing French in all of SEA. He gave no name as appointee for Commanding General, but Embassy has heard General Koenig's name rumored.

Small number of Deputies present, deplored by Letourneau in his opening words during debate, was not measure of interest in Indochina problem among Deputies but rather should be taken as indicative of lack of real opposition to government's budget proposals for Indochina. As this was examination of budget rather than full-scale debate on Indochina policy, week end timing of debate made for absences by Deputies who were willing forego budget debate but would probably not have wished to miss policy debate.

DUNN

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[3] The government of Antoine Pinay resigned on Dec. 23 as the result of the disintegration of the government coalition over a domestic economic issue. A new government was formed by René Mayer on Jan. 7, 1953. In the new cabinet, Georges Bidault replaced Robert Schuman as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Jean Letourneau retained his position as Minister for the Associated States. René Pleven remained Minister of Defense.

751G.5/12–2952

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State (Matthews)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] December 29, 1952.

Subject: Discussion of the Indochina Problem by a French–United States Working Group.

Problem

In Paris on December 18, Messrs. Schuman and Letourneau told the Secretary that they wished urgently to discuss with us the question of our assistance in furnishing additional arms and equipment for the use of additional indigenous troops in Indochina. The Secretary told Messrs. Schuman and Letourneau that, if the French approved, he would be glad to designate a working level group to assist in a thorough discussion of the Indochina situation with a similar French group. The French Government has now fallen. Nevertheless, a decision should be reached as to the agenda, composition of the US group and the place of meeting so as to be prepared in the event the French accept the Secretary's offer. In any case, a discussion of the kind mentioned would appear essential at an early date.

Discussion

Put very briefly, the French are worried about their ability to carry their present share of the burden in Indochina while we are worried as to whether the total burden now being carried by the French and by us is sufficient to give a reasonable prospect of a favorable outcome.

There is increasing evidence of a growing belief in French governmental circles and in French public opinion generally that France cannot indefinitely or even for very much longer continue the present effort in Indochina. The French position is that, in a struggle which is mainly of interest in connection with the preservation of Southeast Asia for the free world and as a demonstration of free world determination to resist Communist aggression in that area, France can no longer be expected to continue to shoulder the entire burden of supplying nonindigenous fighting forces plus a very high share of the financial burden. (Nevertheless, sentiment in France, whether in the Government or among the Socialist opposition, for a true "internationalisation" of the conflict seems very slight; the French want more help without diminution of their responsibility.)

When the French Secretary of State for Defense, M. Chevigne, recently visited Indochina he told a number of Vietnamese that 1953 would be the last year during which French military support to Vietnam at its present level could be expected. The French have already slightly reduced the French Union forces in Indochina this year. They contemplate a further slight reduction next year. The French program involves an increasing transfer of military and security responsibilities in Indochina to the Vietnamese national army and Government and appears to be predicated on the assumption that the Vietnamese will be able within a definite if unstated period to cope with the enemy.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.

On the other hand, United States governmental and public opinion is becoming increasingly concerned with prospects in Indochina. The results of the military operations since October have destroyed whatever optimism may have existed regarding the possibility of a prompt settlement. There is a growing realization of the great strength of the Viet Minh military forces and of the importance attached to those forces by the Chinese Communists as evidenced by the aid being furnished by them. There is a full measure of appreciation of and admiration for the efforts and sacrifices being made by the French. Nevertheless it appears increasingly doubtful whether those efforts and sacrifices are being made in the framework of an over-all program which (short of a Chinese Communist invasion which would create an entirely different situation) affords a reasonable prospect of a successful termination of the struggle. We here simply do not know and have therefore had no opportunity to appraise such French plans as may exist for the defeat or at least the diminution of the enemy's strength to a point where the non-Communist Vietnamese can really handle the situation as projected by the French. The gaps in our information are not so much in matters of detail as they are in the over-all appraisal of the situation and prospects by the highest French authorities.

It has, for example, been quite evident on the basis of operations so far this year, that the French military commanders in the field do not have available sufficient forces to maintain the initiative. The mobile forces available to the French commanders have been seriously decreased as a result of the siege of Na San. The fact that the French command is today favorably considering plans for both an important increase in the regular national army of Vietnam and the arming of militia troops at the village level is a clear indication of the French realization that unless more troops are put in the field on our side we can not hope to cope with the enemy or to maintain the initiative.

Thus we are confronted with (1) France's unwillingness and perhaps inability to continue indefinitely to play her present vital part in the struggle in Indochina; (2) the probable absence of any program based on existing or immediately prospective resources and capabilities which gives reasonable promise of the destruction or at least an important reduction of enemy strength; and (3) the probability of an early formalization of a French appeal for added US aid in equipping increased numbers of indigenous troops. (M. Letourneau and others feel strongly that the aid commitments made last June have not been fully honored.)

We must, on the basis of the above, determine not only whether to give additional aid but also whether there is a reasonable prospect that the aid we are extending, particularly in weapons and equipment, is in fact contributing to a probable favorable solution and will not fall eventually into the hands of the enemy. The element of calculated risk cannot of course be absent from this problem. But we should and can avoid uncalculated risk.

Recommendations

These are divided between *Questions for Discussion*, *Proposed Composition of the Working Group* and *The Location of the Talks.*

Questions for Discussion

The current program in Indochina includes military, political and economic factors. Under present circumstances, the strengthening of the military effort on our side would appear to be the basic consideration to success in political or economic directions. Therefore, the military questions which it is recommended be explored in the proposed Franco-American working group discussions are listed first below with the reservation that a clear-cut distinction between military and political items is obviously impossible.

The questions which it is recommended be taken up are as follows (subject to refinement and restatement by the US working group when constituted):

(*a*) *Military*

(1) Has the course of operations so far this year modified the views of the French High Command as to the prospect, under present conditions, of defeating or at least considerably reducing the enemy?

(2) If the answer to the above question is affirmative, what additional forces and other means including aircraft, infrastructure, etc., does the French High Command believe would be necessary to achieve the result desired, assuming of course that the enemy continues to be dependent entirely upon indigenous manpower?

(3) In view of the course of operations this year and, assuming a generally recognized need for additional forces, does the French High Command intend to modify whatever program may have existed for the gradual reduction of the French Union expeditionary corps?

(4) Assuming the need for additional forces, where do the French believe they can be secured?

(5) Pending the availability of additional native troops of good quality, and in view of the recent NATO resolution and of the fact that the US and possibly other countries are using draftees in Korea to fight the battle of the free world there, would it not be possible to contemplate at least a limited and temporary use of French conscripts in Indochina?

(6) Do the French envisage that the forces of the French Union will remain in Vietnam until the Vietnamese forces are demonstrably in a position to cope with the situation? (Any increased US assistance would presumably involve at least some such commitment from the French. And the US may wish, after the problem has been fully studied, to insist on an increase in French Union forces in Indochina.)

(7) Could a closer contact be established between our military authorities in Korea and the French military authorities in Indochina on such matters as training and exchange of intelligence regarding Chinese Communist activities?

(8) What is the present French attitude toward the accreditation of a US liaison officer to the French General Staff in the Far East (particularly to the Plans and Operations Section of the General Staff)?

(9) When do the French plan to create a Vietnamese National Air Force?

(*b*) *Political*

(1) Are both countries in full agreement that retention of all of Indochina as part of the free world is in fact essential militarily and politically if we are to prevent Communist domination of Southeast Asia?

(2) Is the French Government therefore willing to study the Indochina problem not only on the basis of the US bearing a greater share of the present burden but also on the basis of an increase in the total effort to be made in Indochina by France and US?

(3) In view of the necessity of obtaining a maximum of indigenous nationalist support for the struggle against Communist aggression, would the French be willing to explore with us and with the British the possibility of a tripartite statement setting forth the activities and aims of the three powers in Southeast Asia and expressing their conviction that peace and security in the area are obtainable, once Communist aggression has been defeated, only through the exercise of complete sovereignty by the peoples of the area? (Such a tripartite statement might have considerable political value, particularly in the framework of an increased military effort, while any further French unilateral statement would generally be interpreted as a sign of weakness.)

(4) What are the French plans for the reorganization of French political representation in Indochina during the coming year? To what extent will these plans promote the Vietnamese sense of political responsibility by emphasizing France's abandonment of the role of direct administration?

(5) What is the present French view of the effect of a military victory for our side in Indochina on the prospects of Chinese Com-

munist aggression? (Letourneau made quite a point of this last summer.)

(6) In view of progress in the formation of the Vietnamese National Army and the increasing role in the military and political direction of the war to be assumed by the Vietnamese Government, would it not be desirable to plan for direct accreditation of a US supply mission to the Vietnamese Defense Ministry?

(*c*) *Economic*

(1) To what extent do the French believe financial contribution of the Associated States to the support of their own armies might be increased through increased taxation and tax reform?

(2) Would it not be possible to draw up a program of public works and relief activities which would employ large numbers of persons in doubtful areas, without interfering with military recruiting, and hence make a real political contribution in addition to the obvious economic advantage? (MSA/Saigon has views on this point.)

Proposed Composition of the Working Group

When the French accept the offer made to them by the Secretary, we will presumably be hearing from them about the composition of their own group. On the assumption that this will be at the working rather than the ministerial level and assuming further that it is desirable to have the respective groups as small as possible, the following suggestions are submitted:

Defense—Maj. Gen. J. S. Bradley[2] or someone designated by him; also someone designated by Gen. Trapnell who is Chief of MAAG, Saigon.

State—A representative of the Saigon Embassy, perhaps Al Wellborn; a representative of the Paris Embassy; a representative of EUR; a representative of FE; and a representative of S/P.

The Secretary indicated that Mr. Harriman's office should also be represented.

The above adds up to eight members.

It is recommended that the US group be constituted and begin to study the definite formulation of just what we wish to obtain from the talks as soon as possible.

Location of Talks

It is believed important that the conversations take place in Paris rather than in Saigon. What is desired is the thinking in France at the highest working level rather than more information on the day-to-day tactical situation in Indochina. Furthermore, US–French bilateral talks in Saigon would immediately raise the question of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian participation; we are not yet at the stage where such participation would be valuable.

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[2] Deputy Director for Strategic Plans, Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

751J.00/12-3052

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Under Secretary of State (Bruce)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] December 30, 1952.

Subject: Viet Minh Capabilities and the Threat to Laos

1. In reply to a telegram from the Department, we have had replies from Saigon, Hanoi, and Vientiane concerning the seriousness of the Viet Minh threat to Laos in view of recent military operations. The replies cover talks with French civil and military authorities as well as indigenous sources where appropriate.

2. *All sources believe that the Viet Minh possess the capability of taking the Lao town of Sam Neua, about 30 miles into Northeast Laos from the Tonkinese border, but all agree that further action in Laos is unlikely in the near future.* It was generally felt that a drive into Laos would be more for the propaganda value than for the intention of gaining and holding more ground.

3. General de Linares thinks that the Viet Minh campaign in the Thai country is drawing to a close (based on troop movements), but a success at Sam Neua might take the sting out of the Viet Minh failure at Nasan.

4. In discounting a drive into Laos, the lack of strong pressure for some time and the movement of major troop units are immediate factors. More fundamental are the factors of terrain, supply over a long distance, and an unfriendly population.

5. While generally optimistic, none of the sources would expressly deny the capability of the Viet Minh to undertake such a drive, difficult as it would be. The French commander in Laos recalled that the Japanese during the Second World War had unexpectedly made just such a march, from Sam Neua southeast to Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang.

6. Although Vientiane reports general confidence in not only the ability of the defending forces, in the event of a continued Viet Minh drive, but in the willingness of the local population to resist, Hanoi states that Lao troops (2 battalions) at Dien Bien Phu deserted to their homes when the French abandoned the post. A French archeologist recently returned from Laos also believes that the Lao cannot be counted on for support should the tide turn against the French Union forces. These reports, it should be added, are the first to deprecate the Lao troops and populations. Previously the French had praised their attitude and spirit, within the limits of a natural indolence.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director, and John I. Getz of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs. An attached map of Viet Minh dispositions is not printed.

7. Elsewhere in the Thai country of northwest Tonkin, the posts of Lai Chau and Nasan have not been threatened for over two weeks. Major action in Tonkin has been confined to Franco-Vietnamese efforts to clean out infiltrated Viet Minh units in the southeast corner of the Red River Delta.

POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES WITH RESPECT TO INDOCHINA, 1953: DECLINING FRENCH MILITARY FORTUNES; THE VIET MINH INVASION OF LAOS; ACCELERATED UNITED STATES AID FOR INDOCHINA

751G.5 MSP/1-253: Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, January 2, 1953—7 p. m.

423. Repeated information Paris 205, Saigon 318. In response Embassy–STEM telegram indicating concern re high cost estimate each centralized village (Contel 366, December 11)[1] Hanoi STEM representative and I called today on Governor Tri and his US aid director to discuss matter. Tri said his services had just completed initial studies for first pilot village and that accordingly he would be able provide concrete details hitherto lacking.

Site selected is Dong-Quang, about thirty kilometers due south Hanoi in Hadong province at point roughly equidistant from Hung-Yen province to east, troubled Phu-Ly to south and VM-infested limestone formations to west. Plot is triangle bordered on two sides by river and on third by irrigation canal, 100 hectares in area and now containing two hamlets. It is planned to group there 20 or 25 villages within radius of three or four kilometers of center, with ultimate population of 1,000 families or about 10,000 persons. Part of land to be occupied by construction is communal rice paddies for which no indemnity required. No allowance made in estimates below for condemnation any private lands. Existing villages which would be relocated on site are small and in most cases have been built and rebuilt during course of war. Tri thinks there will be no problem in attracting dwellers to new center in view security and services latter will offer; site chosen purposely to be defensible but close by troubled areas.

Estimates given us this morning total 6,500,000 piastres, broken down as follows: five kilometers roadway 800,000; electrification (installing underground generator now on hand and wiring) 500,000; defensive posts and other protective devices 820,000; public buildings including infirmary, information center, post office, library and meeting hall 600,000; school for five classes 150,000; market and slaughter house 300,000; public stables and granaries 400,000; drainage, sanitation and wells 500,000. In addition each of 1,000 families would be granted 2,000 piastres toward cost of own dwelling which they would construct themselves. Not included are costs of work animals, tools, seed or relief goods which might be provided under STEM programs now operative.

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[1] Not printed.

Tri said this center would take at least six months to complete and he wishes experiment to be concluded in all phases before embarking on further similar projects. He said also he thought funds to build this center, all of which will be requested of STEM, should be available from the counterpart credits recently turned back to national committee. After this pilot village is completed and lessons learned he wishes proceed construct one in each of fifteen other delta provinces. Over-all scheme appears have been reduced more modest proportions since it calls now for only four centers Hadong province instead of 36 mentioned earlier. Principal defensive positions would be occupied by Bao-Chinh-Doan and secondary posts by militia, all defense forces totaling about two companies.

STEM officer and I both believe estimates may be somewhat low and for first essay 10 million piastres should be set aside, subject to continuing review. I recommend in strongest terms that general approval be given to project and that Governor Tri be authorized proceed, details and final figures to be subject to discussion. This is project especially dear to him and he feels its initiation indispensable in what he calls "crucial year 1953." Linares has told me some such plan would be invaluable adjunct to military operations and that only cost has given him pause. Strong US backing this project will give new point and direction to aid in Tonkin as well as instill vote of confidence in new regional administration.

STURM

751G.5 MSP/1–953: Despatch

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET
No. 256

SAIGON, January 9, 1953.

Subject: Operation and Status of Programs Under Mutual Security Act of 1951 as of Quarter Ending December 31, 1952.

(*a*) *Adherence to Commitments. The Associated States and France have adhered to commitments made in the course of MSP Aid negotiations.*

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[1] This despatch referred to circular airgram 2139, Nov. 24, 1952, which contained reporting instructions originated by the Director for Mutual Security. The chief of mission in each country where Mutual Security programs were being carried out was asked to submit quarterly reports on the operation and status of those programs. (700.5 MSP/11–2452) For documentation on the Mutual Security Program in general, see volume I.

(*b*) *Political Developments. In Vietnam the political problem remains achievement of a dynamic regime which by conviction, determination, and example will mobilize and unify the country against Viet Minh nationalist pretensions.* The greatest single contribution could be made by Bao Dai if he had the will to use his undoubted intelligence to provide real leadership and example. Although Bao Dai has frequently spoken of his willingness to provide such leadership and although the American Embassy and the French authorities have exhorted him to fulfill his role as chief of a state at war it is not likely that he will ever be moved to the real activity that the situation requires. So far, however, he has obtained from the French enough concessions for the country to claim an independent status. He has mediated between conflicting groups and has dismissed Governments which outlived their usefulness and appointed new Governments which have amounted to improvement over their predecessors. Thus, the Tam regime which he named last June was an improvement over the Huu administration. But now something more is required. Bao Dai's prestige is declining as his indulgences and the fact that he is accumulating a fortune abroad become known.

The Tam government in August published a long awaited National Budget for 1952, the first budget to be published since the Vietnamese assumed full financial control in January 1951. In July it instituted a national defense surtax. In December, decrees were issued for village and municipal elections, an important step toward the fulfillment of the Tam commitment to create a National Assembly.

In Cambodia, the King, who took the leadership of the government last July, continued to display the energy which has done much to redress a deteriorating political situation. It remains to be seen whether he can sustain the pace he has set.

Laos, fortunately, was largely free of political problems.

(*c*) *Major Economic Developments. By projecting figures for the first six months of the year, it may be estimated that the 1952 trade deficit of the Indochinese customs union will reach approximately 6 billion piastres, almost doubling the adverse balance registered in 1951.* As in previous years, the trade deficit is practically wholly vis-à-vis the franc zone and should counter-balance France's franc military expenditures in the Associated States. These expenditures were large enough during 1952 to give the Associated States a favorable balance of payments—as was the case in 1950 and 1951, but due to the considerable increase in the trade deficit, the inflationary implications inherent in France's military expenditures are essentially eliminated under present conditions, and apart from other considerations it is unlikely that the Indochinese external accounts position should have any significant repercussions on the level of U.S. aid.

Given the present ill-conceived and poorly managed fiscal system, we cannot reasonably expect any major improvement in the economic situation of the Associated States. Financial instability, in large part attributable to, and a reflection of, the precarious political structure of the national governments, in turn a consequence of civil war, will probably continue to be an element which must be given due consideration, and which will make deficit financing unavoidable. On the other hand, with the continuation of the sound central banking practices of which the newly established Institute of Issue has shown itself capable during its first year of operation, government borrowing should be kept within reasonable bounds and handled in such a way as to prevent uncontrollable inflationary pressures from arising. In summation it may be fairly stated that the economic and financial outlook, barring changes on the political and war fronts, is not such as to portend a necessity for either an increase or decrease in U.S. aid in the immediate future.

(*d*) *International Developments. The resolution of December 17, 1952 by which the NATO countries recognized that the campaign being waged by the French Union Forces in Indochina "deserves continuing support,"*[2] *served to highlight the importance of the Indochina war as a contribution to the security of the free world.* It should also serve to dramatize the obstacles which NATO commitments place in the way of the French effort here at a time when more troops are needed in the field, especially technicians and qualified officers and non-commissioned officers for combat duty.

(*e*) *Effect of MSP Aid on Internal Stability and Security. It is clearly apparent that, thanks to United States arms aid, the Franco–Vietnamese forces now have an edge over the Viet Minh.* Two years ago, before the aid programs began to operate, the Franco–Vietnamese position was precarious indeed. Although the present condition of internal political stability and security is not satisfactory, conditions have improved in the north and in the south since the aid programs were started and there has been no loss of ground in the center.

There has also been a marked development of governmental structure which was almost non-existent two years ago.

(*f*) *General Progress in Activation Planned Forces.*

Army: The activation of units in the Associated States Armies is proceeding as planned but not along the line expected. A large number of units activated in the Vietnamese National Army are units already a part of the French Army and, by a change of designation only, become a part of the Vietnamese National Army. This procedure has not increased the number of troops in Indochina. The failure to increase the combat forces is recognized by MAAG, the French, and Vietnamese. Action has been taken to correct this situation by the

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[2] For text of the resolution, see footnote 5, p. 321.

French in planning and by activation of additional light Infantry Battalions before the end of the rainy season in 1953.

Air Force: The French Air Force is operating at approved strength level with no current plan for introduction of additional air units.

Navy: French Naval Forces are currently operating at approved strength in both personnel and ships. Certain ships and craft originally brought out to Indochina by the French are in such condition that their continued operation is no longer practicable. These units are being replaced by MDAP delivered ships without effecting a change in the Force Basis. Deliveries in 1953 will replace obsolete equipment, and anticipated losses. An increase in French Navy personnel is not planned. However, plans for a Vietnamese Navy are underway with the training of enlisted men and some petty officers being carried on at Nha Trang. It is anticipated that some 1600 Vietnamese officers and men will be manning smaller ships.

(*g*) *Deliveries of U.S.-Furnished End-Items. The receipt of MDA equipment is on schedule. There are no shortages which would affect either the tactical operation or the activation schedule of units.*

(*h*) *Country's Ability to Utilize Military Aid.*

Army: The ability of the country to utilize the MDAP and MSP is based on the assumption that the war in Indochina will continue to be a local war and that there will be no intervention by the Chinese Communists. The French, who have the responsibility for logistical support of both French and Associated States Forces, have adequate supply facilities for the war as now being fought. It is expected during the first three months of calendar year 1953 there will be a small reserve accumulated. This reserve will be below that authorized for Indochina.

Air Force: The French Air Force is undermanned and this has a negative effect on their ability effectively and efficiently to conduct maintenance and overhaul functions and operate their aircraft at desired rates. Airfields are adequate but the main supply and maintenance depot is poorly situated and inadequately manned to perform an acceptable mission.

Navy: It is believed that there is maximum utilization of MDAP material in Indochina. However, the personnel ceiling on French Naval Forces, and deterioration from weather conditions make it difficult to carry out preventive maintenance in accordance with U.S. Navy standards. Facilities for receipt and stowage of MDAP equipment are adequate at the present time, and efforts along this line are steadily being improved.

(*i*) *Defense Production Planning.*

Army: There has been no development for defense production for Indochina. Several plans have been proposed for the production of items which would assist in the war effort. To date, however, neither the French nor the Vietnamese have initiated action with a view to implementing these proposals.

Air Force: The conversion to one type fighter-bomber aircraft (F8F, Bearcat) and the stated inability of the French to support jet *interceptor aircraft are major developments in the defense program for air.* The visit of the French Air Secretary, M. Montel, may bring about additional personnel to alleviate the totally inadequate French Air Force personnel strength of approximately 10,000.

Navy: The conversion of MDAP delivered landing craft is being carried out at the Navy Yard in Saigon and at the Amphibious Base. However, the manufacturing of defense items for prosecution of the war against the Viet Minh is non-existent. No future developments are known.

(j) Economic Development Planning. One of the most encouraging steps forward in the field of economic development plans and programs was taken by Laos. In November this country, which has been well in advance of the other two Associated States in economic planning, went one step further when, by a Royal Ordonnance, it created a Commissariat General for Planning and a National Investment Fund to finance the plans. American Economic Aid funds will, though accounted for separately, be incorporated as part of this fund. Thus, with a rough five-year plan previously developed, Laos will become the first Associated State to integrate MSA financing with other sources and to apply its combined resources to the attainment of fairly well presented and coordinated goals.

Cambodia has drafted, but very roughly, uncoordinated functional five-year plans by ministerial fields. STEM's Chief was recently informed by the National Director of Planning, who is also Chairman of Cambodia's American Aid Committee, that one of the reasons why the country's plans had not been further advanced and consolidated to date was that Cambodia lacked any trained personnel to do this. He explained that his government had several months ago asked the UN Committee on Technical Assistance for the loan of an expert "who would be neutral" but that France had influenced the Committee not to act on the request. This serious situation of experts' acceptability is further discussed below.

The Vietnamese government also has made some advance, for this fall for the first time it programmed the entirety of its MSA funds in advance instead of gradually utilizing them on a series of discoordinated projects. All three governments have already been asked to present their own programs for 1953–1954, not just to accept them ready-made from STEM.

(k) Economic and Social Effects of Point IV Program

Ever since its establishment STEM has been endeavoring to get its technical assistants accepted as true advisors to the governments of the Associated States, but to date the results have not been too encouraging. Under the basic accords with France, each State must give priority to French technicians. Laos has willingly done so, and its government functions relatively smoothly. Cambodia and Vietnam have been fearful of French influence being exerted on behalf of

French interests through any strategically placed expert, and they have not dared to risk French displeasure by calling upon STEM. Only a few weeks ago energetic Governor Tri informed the Chief of STEM that he could not take even a junior Relief and Rehabilitation Officer into his Regional Social Action Service for fear of ruffling French feelings, though he would be happy to have him working in the North as part of STEM's regional office. Under these circumstances STEM has been successful in guiding its own limited program but not in assisting the governments in the administration of their own vastly larger ones. The High Commissariat's own Financial and Economic Counselor reflected much the same fears in his statement to the STEM Chief of Mission that he was doubtful how effective France's proposed Social and Economic Mission would be "as long as we, like you, must always work on the fringe of government."

Nevertheless, some successes in training have recently been registered—notably as a result of a MSA-financed, Ministerially-led educational delegation to the Philippines. We are hopeful that this may have proved to be the starting point of a gradual reorientation of elementary education away from classic techniques and doctrines to a community welfare, grass-roots approach.

(*l*) *Attitude of Government and Public Toward U.S. Aid Program*

The French commanders in all three services (*and the Vietnamese Civil Government*) *recognize the importance of the MDA and MS Programs.* This aid has made it possible for French to maintain and to improve their position over last year and for the civil government to increase authority. However, it is questionable if either the Vietnamese army or the civilian population realize the amount or the importance of this aid as all items are distributed through normal French supply channels.

MSA's operations in Public Health and Agriculture have successfully identified the United States with a policy of respect for the individual and human dignity. MSA's commercial import program has in some measure broken the bottleneck toward economic progress. We have even had an influence on the Viet Minh, who, it has been reported by several sources, have forbidden the destruction of STEM first-aid kits or wells during any temporary occupation of a village enjoying these facilities—presumably because they are so popular with the masses, whether they be peasants on our side or peasants on the other side.

(*m*) *Provisions of Section 511*[3]

STEM's full report under Section 511, together with detailed data developed by each of the Associated States, was submitted to Wash-

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[3] Under Section 511 of the Mutual Security Act of 1951, P.L. 165, 82d Cong. (65 Stat. 373), as amended by the Mutual Security Act of 1952, P.L. 400, 82d Cong. (66 Stat. 141), countries receiving aid were required to undertake certain actions designed to promote self-help and mutual cooperation.

ington as Tomus A 236.[4] This report set forth many weak points open to adverse criticism as to the degree with which the Associated States have fulfilled the criteria of Section 511. Essential weak points are failure resolutely to push land reform in Vietnam, failure to effect large scale mobilization of domestic capital and to prevent the flight of such capital in the form of profits, and lack of any large scale reform of tax legislation and administration.

In short it could possibly be said that the countries have taken some, but not all possible steps to mobilize their industries for mutual defense and gear their fiscal budgetary capital, political and military resources to the objectives of the Mutual Security Act of 1952.

Particularly in the larger cities, "business as usual" has been much more the goal than total mobilization for war. This situation has been reported frequently by the Embassy and to some extent by this Mission. It has also been brought to the attention of MSA officials in person, particularly of Mr. C. Tyler Wood when he recently visited Saigon. Indeed, as first priority in the economic field, the Mission hopes that the United States Government may be able at the highest levels during the coming months to persuade:

1. The French, who have heretofore feared the competitive industrialization of the Associated States, actively to support an all-out war effort which would include, in so far as possible, a program of military and para-military production. In the past it has been easier to receive finished military items on a free basis than to manufacture, where appropriate, some of them with local materials and local manpower,
2. Both the French and the Associated States to accept American experts in the field of public administration or for that matter French experts under the new French economic aid program which we understand the French parliament has just authorized.

On the other hand, there is no doubt whatsoever that soldiers of the Associated States are actively fighting against communism. Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians are dying every day to protect the Associated States and therefore Southeast Asia from communist domination. There is also no question but that within the limits of their present capabilities these States are vigorously assisting the French Armies with men and materials. Vietnam, and to a lesser extent Cambodia, are contributing a very substantial part of their budgetary receipts to fighting the war. There is finally no doubt at all also that the Associated States are actively cooperating with France under the terms of their Basic Accords, and among themselves under the Pau Agreements. Thanks to this cooperation which is evidenced by such institutions as the quadripartite Institute of Issue, the tripartite Reunion of Directors of Foreign Commerce and the quadripartite study Committees on Foreign Trade and Tariffs, the three Associated States are operating as a complete monetary and customs union.

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[4] Not printed.

Note: MAAG has informed the Embassy that Admiral Radford, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, has expressed a desire to receive four copies of the Embassy's Monthly MDAP report which has been superseded by this new Quarterly report. It is requested that the Department determine whether or not copies of this new quarterly report should be provided to Admiral Radford and instruct the Embassy accordingly. If the Department determines that copies of this report should go to Admiral Radford it is requested that 4 copies of this despatch be sent directly to "Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif."

DONALD R. HEATH

751H.00/1-1253 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 12, 1953—6 p. m.

1378. Repeated info Paris unnumbered, Phnom Penh unnumbered. I visited Phnom Penh over week end. Incidents recounted Phnom Penh's 34 and 35 to Department January 10[1] had created belief here that very serious deterioration of situation had occurred. After talks with ComRep Risterucci and General Langlade[2] and members of Cambodian Government I have considerable hope that deterioration may be temporary and succeeded by renewed gradual progress in pacification.

There is bitter fight, poorly concealed, being waged by Democratic Party leaders against King and his government. This group was unquestionably behind school strike and grenade incident recounted in Phnom Penh's 34. Unfortunately King following the death of his daughter (see Phnom Penh's despatch 29, January 5)[3] not only went into strict mourning but to all intents and purposes practically abdicated business of government and his cabinet which is far from impressive avoided decisive action which should have been undertaken to end disorders. King seems to have been overcome by death his favorite daughter, first time tragedy has entered his life. Risterucci, however, seems entirely confident that following the mourning period which ends today, King will resume active control of government and will take severe measures against Democratic Party ringleaders who have promoted disorders in Phnom Penh.[4] Hitherto King has been unwilling indulge in any measures of severity against this group. Yesterday King dismissed Minister of Interior for failure to handle situation.

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[1] Neither printed.

[2] Commander of French Union Forces in Cambodia.

[3] Not printed.

[4] On Jan. 13, the King dissolved the National Assembly and declared martial law. For the text of the King's proclamation of Jan. 13, 1953, see *L'Année Politique, 1953* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 570–572.

Both Risterucci and General Langlade insisted that despite death and ambush of governor Preyveng province (Phnom Penh's 35) very definite progress had been made in pacification. It is natural of course for both ComRep and General to maintain that they are making progress but I have definite impression that pacification and security in last few months has in fact improved and that there will be further improvement. This in large measure would seem be due to increase in auto defense units in regions hitherto controlled by Viet-Minh. More than 4,000 rifles have been distributed to such units. Langlade said that if he were able to put five more battalions immediately in field and start work immediately on eight stretches of strategically important roads (at total cost of only $150,000) he could achieve general pacification of Cambodia within eight months. However, it would take good many months to organize, equip and officer additional battalions which, Langlade insisted, must be commanded at company level by Cambodians. Therefore even if authorization to increase Cambodian Army and undertake necessary road work were immediately forthcoming it would take year and possibly year and half before pacification could be completed. One of Langlade's early aims is to break up Viet-Minh control of pepper plantation region in south. On Chinese plantation owners the Viet-Minh have been levying tribute estimated to be between 15 to 30 million piastres a year. Langlade says he has promise of government it will support him in expelling Chinese planters convicted of having paid protection money. He believed six or eight expulsions would determine other planters to resist Viet-Minh extortion.

HEATH

751G.00/1–1253

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Byington) to the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 12, 1953.

Subject: Discussion of Indochina by French–US Working Group

We have read with interest the excellent memo which you drafted and which was sent to Mr. Matthews from Mr. Allison on the subject of the agenda for the projected US–French Working Group on Indochina,[2] and have the following comments to make as of possible interest.

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[1] Drafted by Robert H. McBride, Officer in Charge of French-Iberian Affairs.

[2] For the memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State Allison to Deputy Under Secretary Matthews, dated Dec. 29, 1952, see p. 332.

In the discussion section we concur with the thought that the French cannot continue the present level of their effort indefinitely, and we believe that the stated French position on this point appears reasonable. Insofar as the statement that the French "want more help without diminution of their responsibility" is concerned, we do not take issue with this conclusion but, on the other hand, do not know of much evidence to back it up.

With regard to eventual French plans, especially in the budgetary field, we note that reference is made to a statement in Saigon by French Secretary of State for Army deChevigné to the Vietnamese to the effect that 1953 is the last year France can maintain its military support at the present level. We believe it should be pointed out that no other French official has confirmed this remark, which may have been made in Indochina for the purpose of stirring up the local government to get started on its own military programs. Furthermore we do not concur in the statement that the French planning is predicated on an assumption that the Vietnamese will be able to cope with the enemy within "a definite if unstated period." It is true that French appropriations for 1953 are reduced by 5.5% over 1952 (principally because in 1952 there were certain extraordinary payments involved which will not recur in 1953) and that a further slight decrease for 1954 can be envisaged but this certainly does not indicate a French belief that a complete turnover to the Vietnamese in the military field is possible within a given period. On the other hand, our belief, based on statements which have been made to us by the French, is that they consider possibly, or at least hope, they may be able to withdraw an important percentage of their ground forces within a given period, but they appear to realize that some ground, and considerable air support, plus a major training effort will be needed almost indefinitely.

We fully agree with the conclusions of the memorandum that events since October have certainly not increased optimism as to the likelihood of any military solution under present conditions. Furthermore we believe that if the present level of effort were increased, a similar increase would doubtless be effected on the opposing side, thus causing more and more of the Western effort to be committed in Indochina still without obtaining a settlement. We likewise agree with the conclusions as to the situation with which we are confronted, including the strong likelihood of an early French appeal for additional aid, possibly based on the fact that the decisions of the Letourneau talks in Washington in June, as they were understood by the French, have not been fully implemented.

Passing to the section of the memorandum giving recommendations, we concur with the listed military objectives except those numbered 5) and 6). The first of these recommendations envisages the sending of French conscripts to Indochina. We believe this is an impractical objective for various reasons. In the first place it would require action by the National Assembly to authorize the sending of draftees to Indochina, and the result would be to convert the present campaign into a French "national war." We believe the Assembly would not only refuse to take action declaring a national war, but that an attempt to get parliamentary action in this sense would jeopardize Assembly support for the present French effort, and would in all likelihood lead to a public outcry, which has thus far been avoided, demanding French withdrawal from the Far East and concentration of French Union forces in Europe and North Africa. This is a concept which is very widespread in France, and never far below the surface. However, we believe that to have this thought debated in parliament would be most unfortunate especially in view of the strong support it would probably obtain. Therefore, given our present policy of maintaining the French in Indochina, we believe that to suggest the conscript issue to them would be to endanger our own long-term interests.

Insofar as paragraph 6) is concerned, we are opposed to the suggestion to the French that they increase French Union forces in Indochina. Any such increase would be at the expense of French troops in Europe, where the French already consider themselves dangerously under-strength, and in North Africa. A suggestion in this sense would be open to the same objections as in trying to get French conscripts to Indochina, in that it would give the French an opportunity, which we desire to avoid, to reopen the entire question of whether they can remain in the Far East at all. Since public opinion is so opposed to this campaign, because of its drain on French human and material resources, it is believed that any suggestion to French authorities they increase their forces in the area would have unfortunate repercussions on our relations with them, and, if leaked to the press, would cause an anti-American outcry in France, coupled with a demand for French withdrawal from Indochina.

Under Section (*b*) Political, of Recommendations, we are in general agreement with most of the points though under 2) we note that it is suggested that the United States ask for an increase in the total effort by France to accompany any increase in US aid. While this is of course desirable, we fear that realistically the best we can hope from an increase in our participation, is that the French effort will remain constant. The US would then bear an increased percentage of the burden, a result which is of course unsatisfactory but, we are afraid, is inevitable.

Under paragraph 3) of the Political section, we would not oppose a tripartite statement along the lines envisaged, and believe it would be encouraging to the Vietnamese, nor would we favor any additional French unilateral declarations, though we do not believe they would necessarily generally be interpreted as a sign of weakness.

Under Section (*c*) Economic, we believe that, in addition to the points listed, an effort should be made to study with the French the problem of the franc–piaster exchange rate, and of exchange rates in Indochina in general. The MSA has sent Mr. McDiarmid to Saigon to prepare a report on this subject, which we assume will be available fairly soon. There is also the long-term problem, which might at least be raised by the Working Group, of studying the eventual capabilities of the Vietnamese economy to support a national army. We do not believe that a study of this subject has been made for Vietnam, or the other Associated States, and it will certainly sooner or later represent an important field in which we will require information.

Finally, under the paragraph on the location of the talks, we note that the French in their reply accepting the formula of a working group have proposed that the talks be held in Saigon, while the memorandum to Mr. Matthews states they should be held in Paris. In this connection the Secretary remarked to Ambassador Bonnet that the talks should be held wherever M. Letourneau might be, since personal consultation with him was a prerequisite to their success. We believe this point will require further discussion when the plans of the next French Government and of M. Letourneau become clearer over the next few days.

In conclusion, as a general comment, it would seem that United States negotiators would, just at present, be hampered because they are not in a position to indicate what our policy towards aid, especially military, towards Indochina may be. Therefore, it is wondered whether these points should be raised at all at present. Furthermore if we take the initiative in such talks we run once again the risk of having the French place the question of their withdrawal from Indochina squarely on our doorstep. Lastly the concept of talking about complete independence for the Associated States at this time simply does not jibe with the idea of asking simultaneously for greater French effort in Indochina.

751G.5/1–1653 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, January 16, 1953—7 : 11 p. m.

3915. For your information, at tripartite conversations December 18 in Paris between Secretary, Schuman, Letourneau and Eden, Schuman raised question of additional equipment, arms and general assistance to enable French and Vietnamese to pursue current programs for additional increases in native armies in Indochina. Secretary stated that he could make no commitments but would be glad to send working party to Paris or to Saigon consisting of representatives of State, Defense and DMS to sit down with French and develop full information regarding situation in Indochina. Secretary expressed concern at absence of information on certain subjects stating that it was most important to have thorough and quick review so that we would know present situation and therefore establish firm basis for further steps. This proposal was accepted by Schuman, it being left that he would advise us further as to date and place.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 1479 and to London as telegram 4748.

Shortly thereafter French Government fell. On January 5 French Embassy here informed Department that French Government accepted offer of working level discussions and would communicate with us further.

On January 15 French Embassy informed Department that Letourneau is returning to Saigon end of January and would be able to receive proposed working group early in February. In reply Department representative stated that while there was no indication that incoming administration would not accept principle of working level examination of all the factors involved in Indochina situation, that administration would have to formulate own views regarding composition of group as well as timing, place and scope of discussions. Department representative concluded that we would communicate with French as soon as possible on subject.

For your further information, what Department has had in mind is working level putting together of information of major significance on situation and prospects in Indochina including military, political and economic factors. Previous reviews have concentrated on what needs to be done in case of identifiable Chinese aggression in Indochina but Department believes it now important to have complete survey of what possibilities exist for resolution of present situation without identifiable Chinese aggression. As soon as interdepartmental agreement is reached on scope of the proposed discussions, you will be advised and your comments requested. Department has had in mind very small group including, of course, representation of Paris and Saigon Embassies. We will keep you informed of further developments.

ACHESON

751G.5/1–1953 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 19, 1953—9 a. m.

1418. Rptd info Paris 212, Hanoi unnumbered. General Alessandri, Bao Dai's military adviser and in 1950 French commander of the north, came to see me yesterday to say that there was now general agreement in Paris, in the French command here and on the Viet side as to the necessity increasing Viet National Army by some 41,000 men or 65 light battalions of 640 men each. There should be little difficulty as regards armament, French reserves and expected supplies of small arms, ammunition and motor transport are believed sufficient to equip initially the new light battalions.

The difficulties were in the financing and in Bao Dai's insistence on greater Viet military responsibility and participation in military planning. The problem of financing the greater Viet responsibility could be settled. Alessandri did not have final figures for the cost of 41,000 additional troops but he thought it would not differ greatly from previous estimates of 22 billion francs annually for pay, maintenance and construction and 12 billion francs for initial armament. The French naturally insisted that Viet Government make a greater fiscal effort. This was a legitimate demand.

Hinh's presumed demands in Paris for immediate large extension of Viet military authority and responsibility were excessive. The fact was Viet National Army did not yet have sufficient number of officers capable exercising higher command. But with good will an acceptable compromise could be worked out on this point.

But wrangles over financing and greater military authority for Viet forces should not, Alessandri insisted, be allowed to delay agreement and decision to increase the national army. The fall of the Pinay government had already delayed decision. There was not much more time to be lost. The 65 light battalions must be substantially ready by October next. Final decisions and plans should be agreed upon by end of month.

With these additional forces in Tonkin Alessandri felt sure that Franco–Viet forces could by October next begin decisively to cut down Viet Minh forces. Alessandri had just returned from north where he spoke with Tri, province chiefs, Nationalists and French and Viet officers. He said there was general agreement that time was ripe for successful effort against Viet Minh. The peasants in delta hated the Viet Minh but had as yet no belief in Bao Dai. What they wanted was peace and freedom and with better administration from Tri's government and effective use of Viet troops they would rally to Bao Dai's standard. The morale of the Viet Minh while presently good would not hold up, Alessandri thought, against really successful Franco-Viet operations. There would be a chain reaction of defections to Bao Dai's side.

He thought there was no hope of any major decisive victories in the north before October. There was something, however, to be done in south. Colonel Le Roy[1] had told him that with eight extra battalions, he could clean out so-called old provinces. Given authority and funds, Le Roy said he could recruit, organize, officer and train eight light battalions in four month's time and could clean out that region fairly shortly thereafter. After that operation the eight battalions could be sent as a part of the 65 battalions to the north since it was only in north that war against Viet Minh could be won decisively.

Alessandri insisted again there was no time to be lost in starting these five battalions. It would be useful if US could make representations to that effect at the highest levels to Paris. While there was agreement in principle in Paris as to necessity of increasing national army, there was not the proper sense of the urgency of the matter.

HEATH

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[1] Col. Jean Leroy, a French officer engaged in the organization of Vietnamese militia units. For his account of the war in Indochina, see Jean Leroy, *Un homme dans la rizière* (Paris, Editions de Paris, 1955).

751G.00/1-2553 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, January 25, 1953—9 p. m.

1469. Re Deptel 1381 January 6.[2] Embtels 2218, May 10 and 2224 May 12 were drafted a few weeks prior to replacement Huu by Tam and reflect relatively stagnant political situation existing then. Like ourselves, French recognized this unhappy state affairs and Letourneau's efforts at that time directed largely toward getting in government with more dynamism. About same time, Huu lost confidence of Bao Dai.

Although there were rumors current at time Bao Dai dismissed Huu and directed Tam form government that Letourneau had engineered change, Letourneau assured me he had no advance information appointment Tam. French, however, were pleased have Tam as President and his pro-French orientation has made for easier relations between French and Vietnamese Governments. On other hand, Tam's Francophile sympathies and his sûreté background initially caused concern among Vietnamese nationalists. This concern has been dissipated to some extent as result of Tam's performance to date. Tam has not, however, won support of any significant number of nationalists.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in four parts.

[2] In telegram 1381 to Saigon, Jan. 6, 1953, the Department of State requested an analysis of the situation in the Associated States with reference to the account and recommendations which Saigon had transmitted to Washington in telegrams 2218 of May 10, 1952 (see p. 131), and 2224 of May 12, 1952 (see p. 134). (751G.00/5-1052)

An additional detailed exposition of the views of Ambassador Heath on the situation in Indochina at this time is contained in a letter he transmitted to Philip W. Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, on Jan. 24, not printed. (751G.00/1-2452)

Salient characteristic Tam in contrast to Huu is his energy, but he is handicapped by:

(*a*) Lack of capable team. Recent cabinet reshuffle [3] eliminated some dead wood but failed to bring to Tam's side any outstanding figure and important Defense Minister post remains unfilled. New cabinet is undoubtedly more loyal and probably slightly more capable than preceding one. But it is not a group to inspire Vietnamese and it contains an unduly large proportion of Cochin Chinese.

(*b*) Magnitude and complexity of problems he faces. On analysis Tam's much-vaunted action program remains more shadow than substance. But he must be given credit for activity, hard work and enthusiasm in much larger degree than his predecessors. He has produced budget and carried out elections.[4] Point is not so much what Tam has failed to accomplish as what he has achieved considering that he must fight a war, institute social reforms, and get along with French and Bao Dai while at same time pushing for more self-determination for Vietnamese.

(*c*) Lack of widespread popular support. This is a hard nut to crack. Letourneau and French officials argue, with considerable justification that because of French domestic political considerations and security factors in prosecution war in Indochina granting of additional concessions to AS and turning over of more responsibility to them can go no faster. On other hand, large proportion of politically conscious Vietnamese and Cambodians resent degree to which French continue to exert influence and enjoy privileges in Indochina and therefore remain distrustful of French and refuse to participate actively and constructively in government. Some headway has been made, however, most heartening sign of more reasonableness on part of both French and Vietnamese being arrangement which brought Tri to governorship north Vietnam. Tam–Tri understanding is still in experimental stage however and is not to be regarded as definite solution.

(*d*) Obstruction is due largely to vested interests, rivalries of political cliques and individuals. Blocking reforms are powerful French business interests with influence in French Assembly, government and High Commissariat and wealthy Vietnamese intent on maintaining control of large land holdings. Hampering development of strong, responsible government are personal ambitions of self-seeking politicians and their chronically negative attitudes.

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[3] Premier Nguyen Van Tam announced major changes in his cabinet on Jan. 9. Included in the reorganization was the appointment of Le Van Hoach as Vice Premier and Minister of Information, and of Le Quang Huy as Minister of Defense ad interim.

[4] Elections for village and municipal councils were held in the government-controlled areas of Vietnam on Jan. 25. In telegram 1479 from Saigon, Jan. 26, Ambassador Heath stated the following: "Too early judge worth and capabilities elected candidates, and degree corruption or 'rigging' unknown, but interesting note that among successful Saigon candidates were number Nationalists. Enormous response voters in democratic process testimony to Tam's political acumen. . . . Action is clear slap in face Viet Minh, who now no longer can point to January 1946 elections as only consultation popular will, and to extreme Nationalist Attentistes who predicted failure owing public apathy." (751G.00/1–2653)

(*e*) Bao Dai's character. Greatest single contribution to improving political situation could be made by Bao Dai if he had will [garbled group] undoubted intelligence to provide real leadership and example. Bao Dai has frequently spoken to me of his willingness, when circumstances are appropriate, to provide such leadership. Both French and Embassy have exhorted him to fulfill his role as Chief of State at war. It is to be doubted that exhortations will ever move him to real activity which situation requires. Small prestige which he enjoyed is declining as his self-indulgence and fact that he is piling up fortune abroad become known. Intrigue such as led to resignation Defense Minister Tri undercuts Tam.

Military situation has not changed significantly in favor of Franco–Viet Forces. Because of US military aid Franco–Viets are in stronger position than ever before. However, despite severe economic hardships besetting Viet Minh, they were able launch Thai country offensive which caught French off balance and forced them into series defensive moves rather than permitting them take initiative as had been hoped. While strategically Thai country is not of great importance, psychological advantage derived by Viet Minh has been impressive and unfortunate. Although French troop morale is good and army ably commanded, High Command handicapped by limitations on manpower available from France, particularly officers and technicians. High Command is apparently only too well aware of uproar which would arise in France if manpower losses were heavy and this probably has some inhibiting effect on aggressive pursuit of offensive operations.

With respect specific policies and measures recommended Embtel 2218 and 2224 some progress has been made. Unfortunately, however, it has been too piecemeal and often ambiguous with result that it has not produced psychological impact so badly needed in this situation. Summary of progress under various headings follows:

1. *French bona-fides:* Letourneau has made strong statements against negotiation with Viet Minh. Less credence seems now to be given by Vietnamese to rumors of "deals" with Viet Minh. But Vietnamese are acutely aware of weariness French with Indochinese war. This has double effect. On one hand, Vietnamese are afraid French will attempt merely hold what they have, waiting for something to turn up. On other hand, they derive certain encouragement from fact France's weakness and concern with her position in Europe lessen chances France withstanding nationalist movement AS. Moreover,

there is growing, but as yet inadequate awareness that real enemy Vietnamese independence is Communist China.

France should continue stress its determination to fight communism to finish in Indochinese [*Indochina*]. If during budget debates French determination is clearly set forth, this should have favorable influence on public opinion here.

2. *Evolutionary statement:* Nearest thing to evolutionary statement was Letourneau's comment at press association luncheon in Washington last June to effect French Union not a prison. This statement created some stir in Paris and has not been publicized by French. Incident illustrates French attitude on statement of this nature, which so far as we are aware has not changed.

Lack of unequivocal declaration regarding French intentions is often mentioned by Vietnamese and foreigners as stumbling block to winning confidence Vietnamese and other Asians. Embassy questions whether any statement made unilaterally by France would be accepted at face value and given full credence by Vietnamese. It certainly would not dissipate overnight mistrust and hatred of French accumulated over years and founded on racial and nationalistic prejudices. Nevertheless, Embassy believes that evolutionary statement of nature discussed Embtel 2224 would be move in right direction and, while not decisive in itself in assuring Vietnamese cooperation, could be pointed to as another milestone in French affirmation of AS independence.

3. *Reorganization of French representation in Indochina:* Plans for transformation French representation in Indochina have been worked out and are scheduled to be put into effect soon after passage French budget. French have shown imaginative thinking in this matter and it is to be hoped that character of new representation and personality French representatives will clearly indicate that reorganization is not merely new facade for old regime. A good move for French in putting project into effect would be to give up Norodom Palace.

Roles of French functionaries in Indochina will reportedly be further reduced by reorganization, but definite information on this score will probably not be available until activation new organizations.

4. *French aid to AS:* French clearly thinking in terms of establishing cultural and sociological aid programs. It is understood that provisions for modest start included in French budget now under discussion. Details not known to Embassy.

5. *French Union and AS diplomatic representation:* Internal French Union relationships have been moving toward Commonwealth model. Three AS now have High Commissioners in Paris and establishment of French High Commissioners in three AS with attributes of diplomatic mission envisaged in project for amending character French representation Indochina. High Council meeting November recommended mutual representation among AS by means delegation but according information from High Commissariat source, diplomatic type representation appears to be on ice for moment, largely because of difficulties defining attributions representatives.

Establishing of diplomatic relations with Japan is agreed and Japanese representative is expected to arrive in Saigon in April.

Desirability of establishment of diplomatic relations with Philippines, India, Ceylon, Indonesia and other states is agreed to by both French and AS but in this matter hyper-nationalistic attitudes of these Asian states is stumbling block. Efforts to influence neighboring states to recognize AS have been made, notably as regard Philippines, but so far without tangible results.

6. *March 8 and Pau accords:* Stipulation which provides all Vietnamese laws must be promulgated by High Commissariat in order apply to French nationals residing Vietnam has perhaps been most unpopular of various privileges accorded French. According Cheysson, political counselor President Tam, repeal promulgation provision was definitely decided at recent meeting High Council Paris. Press account High Council transactions indicates French jurist to be sent Saigon to study question. Appears that abrogation provision agreed to in principle but mechanics implementation still to be worked out.

Question of revision judicial conventions between French and AS also raised at High Council meeting and this question understood to be currently under discussion. Mixed courts are probably least defensible of special privileges enjoyed by French but surprise (approx 15 character garbled) not been source much objection by Vietnamese.

Except for above two, none of special rights accorded French under accords appears to be subject of abrogation discussions.

7. *Organs of French Union:* Embassy knows of no interpretations of French constitution or other significant rulings in direction of doing more honor to principle of independence of AS.

8. *Vietnamese Army:* French and Vietnamese are agreed on need to expand Vietnamese Army by 41,000 men but there remain to be worked out certain details notably as regards proportionate share financing and great French military authority and responsibility for Vietnamese Army. Decision to expand army important step forward in prosecution of war and undoubtedly a significant decision as regards giving real substance to Vietnamese independence. Coupled with this, measures should be taken immediately to form some sort joint chiefs of staff arrangement between Viets and French.

No measures have been taken to increase intake of officers from Dalat school or of schools training reserve officers, but government in [*Jan*] 19 promulgated measure to increase length service reserve officers and technicians from 18 months to 3 years.

It is evident that French reservation regarding reliability of Vietnamese officers continues to be limiting factor to more rapid expansion Vietnamese officer corps. French have reason to be concerned regarding both political reliability and professional ability officers but it is possible they may be taking too cautious an approach to problem. French also remain cool to idea of training in US.

9. *Vietnamese foreign trade:* So far French planning seems to have been directed solely in direction preserving French economic position Indochina. While some Frenchmen may accept principle that geography and circumstances favor Vietnamese trade with nearby Asian areas, notably Japan, no responsible French official has yet given in-

dication that France is prepared to foster trade relations outside French Union.

10. *Vietnamese capital:* There has been no evidence of planning to foster Viet capital for nation or to force reinvestment in Vietnam of large profits made by foreign firms.

Conclusion: We believe that measures and lines of action recommended last May, which have not yet been put into effect are still desirable. We recognize that there are formidable obstacles to some of our proposals and that there are reasonable explanations why French or Viets have not acted along lines suggested. We can be heartened by fact that some progress has been made and that over-all situation has shown some improvement. But we must make more rapid progress.

I am convinced that at this precise time there is no single, novel project which French, Vietnamese, or ourselves can undertake which would decisively contribute to accomplishment early defeat of Viet Minh. I do not believe any conference or study group can "pull such a rabbit out of the hat" at this time. Proposal which promises most decisive military result is that of increasing Vietnamese National Army by 41,000 men. This is agreed to in principle by both Vietnamese and French but, even if recruitment is undertaken immediately this increase force will not be available until November next.

General Trapnell, who will be in Washington in a few days, will tell you, I believe, that with this increase Franco-Viet Forces have chance of "break in the back" of Viet Minh organized military resistance in 1953–54 campaign season, although guerrilla resistance may continue thereafter for a time, perhaps for a long time. We will undoubtedly be called up to provide armament for new battalions but amount should not be great. French may be able to prove to us that France and Vietnamese Treasuries cannot afford to pay full cost and maintenance of these extra battalions, and we may be called upon to assist. If such [proof] is forthcoming, we should in our own interest make a contribution, which need not be large. Figures on costing of increase will be available, I believe within a short time.

In the past I had thought that were Bao Dai himself to take over actual reins of government, he might be able to form an effective government of national unity. I am not convinced now that he has energy to provide necessary direct leadership and example and that his becoming his own Prime Minister would greatly influence public opinion or governmental action. For the moment, we should support Tam, who whatever his deficiencies, is giving this country best government it has had since independence was regained. Perhaps if Governor Tri makes a success of his administration and pacification of north Vietnam, he might succeed Tam and form a more dynamic government. We are, through MSA giving financial and moral support to Tri in his pacification effort in the north. We will continue to urge on Bao Dai, Tam, and Ministers and Governors necessity of reforms and improvements in administrations. Our MSA credits are generally adequate and sufficiently elastic to permit us to extend some support to new reform measures. Of course some unforeseen turn of events may provide us with opportunity or indeed the necessity of attempting something radically new in this situation.

A subsequent telegram will discuss recommendations made in Embassy Telegram No. 2224 which are largely of economic and sociological character and in considerable degree concern MSA.[5] These recommendations are largely for action by Viet Government. In a sense they are even more urgent for now is the time for Viets to "grab the ball" and take initiative in guiding destiny of their country. Demonstration of capability of Viets for strong, responsible government would be uncontestable argument and best guarantee of securing freedom of action Viets so persistently demand.

HEATH

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[5] See telegram 1534 from Saigon, Feb. 4, p. 378.

Editorial Note

On January 27, 1953, John Foster Dulles, who had succeeded Dean Acheson as Secretary of State on January 21, delivered a national radio and television address which presented a survey of foreign policy problems. His remarks included the following statement:

> "The Soviet Russians are making a drive to get Japan, not only through what they are doing in northern areas of the islands and in Korea but also through what they are doing in Indochina. If they could get this peninsula of Indochina, Siam, Burma, Malaya, they would have what is called the rice bowl of Asia. That's the area from which the great peoples of Asia, great countries of Asia such as Japan and India, get, in large measure, their food. And you can see that, if the Soviet Union had control of the rice bowl of Asia, that would be another weapon which would tend to expand their control into Japan and into India. That is a growing danger; it is not only a bad situation because of the threat in the Asian countries that I refer to but also because the French, who are doing much of the fighting there, are making great effort; and that effort subtracts just that much from the capacity of their building a European army and making the contribution which otherwise they could be expected to make."

For the full text of the address, see Department of State *Bulletin*, February 9, 1953, pages 212–216.

PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "State–JCS Meetings"

Substance of Discussions of State–DMS–JCS Meeting at the Pentagon Building, January 28, 1953, 10:30 a. m.[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET

PRESENT

Mr. Dulles
General Smith[2]
Mr. Matthews
Mr. MacArthur[3]
Mr. Nitze
Mr. Stassen[4]

General Bradley
General Hull[5]
Admiral Fechteler
General Twining
General Lemnitzer[6]
Admiral Duncan[7]
General White[8]
Admiral Lalor[9]
Colonel Carns[10]
Admiral Davis[11]
General Gerhardt [*Gerhart*][12]
General Rogers[13]
General Fox[14]
Admiral Boone[15]
Mr. Frank Nash

. . . .

Mr. Stassen: . . .[16] Suppose they [the French] were to drop Indochina?

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[1] The portion of the discussion recorded here occurred in the context of consideration of general U.S. relations with France.

[2] Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, Director of Central Intelligence. General Smith succeeded David K. E. Bruce as Under Secretary of State on Feb. 9, 1953.

[3] Douglas MacArthur II, formerly Counselor of Embassy at Paris, succeeded Charles E. Bohlen as Counselor of the Department of State on Mar. 30, 1953.

[4] Harold E. Stassen succeeded W. Averell Harriman as Director for Mutual Security in January 1953.

[5] Gen. John E. Hull, Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.

[6] Lt. Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Research, U.S. Army.

[7] Adm. Donald B. Duncan, Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

[8] Lt. Gen. T. D. White, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, U.S. Air Force.

[9] Rear Adm. William G. Lalor, USN (ret.), Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[10] Col. Edwin H. J. Carns, USA, Deputy Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[11] Vice Adm. Arthur C. Davis, U.S. Deputy Representative on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Standing Group.

[12] Maj. Gen. John K. Gerhart, USAF, Representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Senior Staff, National Security Council; from Apr. 1, Special Assistant to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Security Council Affairs.

[13] Maj. Gen. Elmer J. Rogers, Jr., U.S. Air Force Member, Joint Strategic Survey Committee, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[14] Maj. Gen. Alonzo P. Fox, U.S. Army Member, JSSC.

[15] Rear Adm. Walter F. Boone, U.S. Navy Member, JSSC.

[16] Ellipsis in the source text.

General Bradley: This would be very bad.

Mr. Stassen: If Japan got stronger, how bad would it be if Indochina were lost?

General Bradley: It would still be bad. It would lead to the loss of all Southeast Asia.

Mr. Dulles: If Southeast Asia were lost, this would lead to the loss of Japan. The situation of the Japanese is hard enough with China being commie. You would not lose Japan immediately, but from there on out the Japs would be thinking on how to get on the other side.

Mr. Stassen: How anxious are the French to hold Indochina?

Mr. Dulles: They have no desire to hold Indochina except for the effect that the loss of Indochina would have in North Africa.

Mr. Matthews: They feel North Africa is vital; otherwise they would become a country like Belgium.

Mr. Stassen: Is it possible to hold a beachhead in Indochina?

General Bradley: Our present capabilities are not enough.

Mr. Stassen: If you were to hold a nubbin, wouldn't that be of psychological importance?

Mr. Dulles: What should our answer be if the French put it up to us that they are going to withdraw from Indochina?

General Bradley: We studied the Indochinese situation in five-power discussions with the French, British, Australians and New Zealanders. We were considering the question of what we could do if the Chinese moved overtly into Indochina. We did not consider French withdrawal in these discussions because the French were participating in them. We are quite clear that we would have to react against China itself. The French and British are leery about blockades, etc.

Mr. Stassen: Unless the Chinese were prepared to accept retaliation by our air, etc., it is doubtful whether they would move into Indochina. But if one were to assume that the French weakened their position in Indochina, might not the Chinese move in some way unless they thought we were prepared to hold at least a beachhead?

General Bradley: We think the Vietnamese could hold the Vietminh if they knew what their future status would be and if the necessary forces could be trained.

Mr. Stassen: Have we no training mission in Indochina?

General Bradley: The French are touchy about training missions for non-commissioned officers. They never took advantage of our offer to have them inspect our Korean training operation.

Mr. Stassen: Should we tie their acceptance of a training mission to any additional help for Indochina?

General Bradley: That might lead them to say that we should take the whole thing. If they would adopt a training system similar to that we use in Korea that might be enough and might obviate a U.S. training mission.

. . . .

751G.00/1-2853

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 28, 1953.

Subject: Discussion of Indochina Situation with M. Mayer and M. Letourneau in Course of Secretary's Forthcoming Trip.[2]

Background of Recent United States–French Discussions

On December 18 last year Secretary Acheson met with Messrs. Schuman, Letourneau and Eden. M. Letourneau discussed the situation in Indochina and, after describing in general terms current plans to increase the projected number of native troops in Viet Nam, concluded that it would be necessary for France to call upon the United States for further assistance in equipping and financing these units. The Secretary replied that he could, of course, make no commitment but that he felt that it would be most useful to initiate working-level discussions of the situation in order to assemble a factual base for the making of future decisions. The Secretary proposed a group with representatives from State, Defense and DMS. Secretary Acheson emphasized the gaps in our knowledge of the situation. (Here he referred not so much to factual intelligence as to the lack of any exchange of views as to military operations in relation to plans; for example, what was the French plan for the current fighting season and how have those operations compared with forecasts earlier in the year?)

Messrs. Schuman and Letourneau thought well of the Secretary's proposal. Two days later, however, the French Government fell. The Department heard nothing from the French until about January 5 and it was not until January 15 that a definite message from M. Letourneau arrived to the effect that he expected to return to Saigon at the end of January and would be prepared to receive the proposed working level group early in February.[3]

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] From Jan. 31 to Feb. 8, 1953, Secretary Dulles and Harold E. Stassen, Director for Mutual Security, visited seven Western European nations including France to confer with allied leaders on problems of common concern, particularly the proposed European Defense Community. For documentation on the trip, see volume v.

A marginal notation on the source text of this memorandum indicates that the Secretary of State did not see the paper prior to his departure for Europe. However, a copy had been given to Counselor Douglas MacArthur II, to show to the Secretary during the trip. The notation added that the paper had not been coordinated or cleared with the Bureau of European Affairs.

Meanwhile because of Ambassador Dunn's views to the general effect that the new French Government would not be in a position to conduct useful discussions regarding Indochina prior to M. Mayer's proposed visit to the United States in February or March and also because of the imminence of the date for a change of administration, the Department developed reservations as to the desirability of the proposed talks, at least at this time. Consequently, when the French Embassy on January 15 delivered the message from Letourneau described above, the reply given was to the effect that while it was assumed the new administration would favor the principle of a thorough examination of all factors relevant to the Indochina situation, it was believed that that administration would wish to reach its own conclusions as to the scope and timing of any conversations and as to the composition of the United States delegation. It was left that the Department would keep the French Embassy informed of developments.

Recommendations

On the basis that the Secretary's current trip to Europe is of a purely fact-finding nature and that he will not wish to make commitments, the following recommendations in relation to any discussion of the Indochina problem are submitted:

1. The Secretary will wish to stress the importance attached by the United States to the magnificent resistance to Communist aggression being conducted by the Franco-Vietnamese troops in Indochina. It is important that this point be stressed and that if possible the Secretary be in a position to say that the President is fully aware of the efforts being made there.
2. It will not be possible to make any commitment with regard to the probable volume of U.S. aid for Indochina in fiscal 1954. For a discussion of the situation as regards fiscal 1953, reference is made to the French briefing memorandum prepared for the Secretary.[4]
3. M. Mayer and M. Letourneau will raise the question of the working level conversations suggested by Secretary Acheson. In reply, the Secretary will presumably wish to state his agreement with the desirability of assembling a current agreed picture of the situation and prospects. If a visit to this country by M. Mayer appears imminent, the Secretary might suggest that M. Letourneau accompany the Prime

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[3] The French Government accepted the proposal for the convening of a working group in an *aide-mémoire* from the French Embassy to the Department of State, Jan. 5, 1953, not printed. (751G.5 MSP/1–553) The information received from the French Embassy on Jan. 15 was relayed by Bonsal to Allison in a memorandum of the same day, not printed. (751G.00/1–1553)

[4] The undated briefing paper on France prepared for the Dulles–Stassen trip is not printed. Annex 2 is titled "US Aid to France, Background and Problems." (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 136)

Minister and that the party also include high level military and economic experts so as to permit a full review. The Secretary may wish to indicate to M. Mayer a considerable urgency with regard to the reaching of an agreed French-United States view regarding the situation and prospects in Indochina. He should stress the point that whatever decisions we reach should if at all possible be translated into an increase in our capabilities by October 1, 1953 which is the date when the new fighting season begins. He should stress that what we wish to achieve is an agreed view as to the capabilities which would be required in order to ensure progress on the military and political fronts.

4. It might be made clear to M. Mayer that we would like to be taken further into the confidence of the French Government in the matter of the conduct of military and political operations in Indochina. The Secretary should state that while we do receive a great flow of intelligence at the operating level and while we are very pleased with the cooperation received from representatives of the French Government in Indochina, the fact is that with regard to planning and the degree to which actual operations measure up to or fall below plans, we feel we are more or less in the dark.

5. The Secretary might indicate that we and the French have somewhat similar problems in Korea and in Indochina so far as the training of native troops is concerned. He might suggest, without making any commitment, that an exchange of training missions might result in the pooling of information and consequently in mutual benefit. He might offer to explore the possibility of our sending to Indochina a mission consisting of a number of US and ROK officers who would acquaint themselves with what the major French military training mission is doing there. Simultaneously a mission consisting of French and Vietnamese (plus possibly a Cambodian and a Laotian officer) might proceed to Korea on a similar mission. The Secretary probably cannot make a commitment on this point pending a full discussion with the Pentagon but it might be helpful to obtain the reaction of Messrs. Mayer and Letourneau at the political level.

6. The Secretary will wish to explore in the most tactful and noncommital manner whether there is any possibility of inducing the French to increase the number of combat-worthy, non-native troops in Indochina. It is quite evident that under present conditions there is a distinct shortage of combat-worthy reserves and it should be equally evident that this shortage will not be supplied, directly at least, by such added native troops as can be made available. The French have never sent conscripts to Indochina. In order to do so, the French Assembly would have to pass enabling legislation. This would be most difficult. Nevertheless, the fact that we are sending conscripts to Korea gives us a right to explore this question with the French. It is possible that what the French were unable to do in the framework of a "colonial war" they might be able to do in the framework of a free world struggle against aggression not only in Indochina but in the Far East as a whole. This is a matter which requires the most delicate handling.

7. The Secretary might wish to discuss with Messrs. Mayer and Letourneau the current political situation in Viet Nam. He may wish to refer to Bao Dai's apathy and to Prime Minister Tam's great diffi-

culty in securing able associates in spite of the qualities of courage and imagination which Tam, himself, has displayed. The Secretary may wish to explore the question of how far Tam's difficulties arise from lack of confidence on the part of the Vietnamese people as to France's eventual intentions. The Secretary should, of course, show an awareness of the degree to which the attributes of sovereignty have been transferred to the Vietnamese Government and of the possibility that any further French statements or concessions would be interpreted at the present time as signs of weakness. He may wish to inquire whether there would be any possibility of improving the political situation in Viet Nam through a bipartite (US–France) or tripartite (US–UK–France) statement to the general effect that once the Communist aggression is defeated in Viet Nam the people of that country will be entirely free to determine both their form of government and their relationship to other countries. (Various French officials including members of Letourneau's staff have done considerable work on a possible tripartite statement on Southeast Asia; this idea will consequently not be entirely new to the French.)

751G.00/1-2853

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 28, 1953.

Subject: Situation in Indochina

It is the purpose of this memorandum to recall briefly the main features of the current situation in Indochina. A separate memorandum contains a number of recommendations for possible use at the time of your conversations with M. Mayer.[2]

Opposing Forces

It is estimated that there are currently under arms some 860,000 men engaged on both sides of the struggle (460,000 on the side of the French Union including the Associated States of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and some 400,000 in the forces of the Communist-dominated, trained, equipped and supplied Viet Minh). About half the forces on either side may be described as combat-trained regular forces with the remainder consisting of regional levies, irregulars, guerrillas, home guards and so on. On the French Union side, there are some 73,000 Metropolitan Frenchmen and perhaps 50,000 North Africans, Foreign Legionnaires and Senegalese.

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[1] This memorandum was drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. A chit attached to the source text indicates that a copy was taken on the plane to Europe by Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Department of State, for the Secretary of State.

[2] *Supra.*

There is being created a Vietnamese Army designed to consist of eight divisions of regular troops officered by natives by the first of January 1955. A French military mission consisting of over 900 officers and 4500 noncommissioned officers is actively engaged in this project. In addition there are currently plans under consideration for the raising of 40,000 additional native levies to be organized in light battalions and also perhaps 20 to 30,000 militia troops in the Tonkin area.

Zones of Influence

The major area of Indochina is of course Viet Nam (consisting of Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina) and this discussion will be limited to that area. The forces of Vietnam and of the French Union control the metropolitan areas of the chief cities of Hanoi and Saigon and a few small areas besides. In addition, there are three main areas where the French Union and the Vietnamese authorities maintain a structure of local administration and control the major communications through a network of military posts but where the enemy conducts guerrilla operations more or less at will. These areas are the Tonkin delta, the Hue–Tourane area in central Annam, and certain portions of Cochinchina.

These areas are separated from each other by large areas which have been for many years and are now under enemy domination and administration. The population of the Viet Minh controlled territory has been estimated at as high as eleven million—nearly half the total population of Viet Nam.

During the past two or three years there has been a net increase in the amount of territory ruled by the Communists. Last fall, most of the Thai mountain country northwest of Hanoi was lost to them.

Current Military Situation

The major combat area is in Tonkin to the north. The dry season there, during which large scale military operations are practical, runs from October 1st to about April 1st. It had been hoped that last fall the Franco-Vietnamese forces with their superior armament and superior mobility (reinforced by some 50 transport planes obtained through U.S. help on a special priority basis) would be able to assume the initiative and inflict serious damage on the enemy.

Instead, it was the enemy who assumed the initiative and overran the Thai country, a mountainous region inhabited by tribesmen traditionally friendly to the French. The Franco-Vietnamese forces, in order to hold two posts in this area, were obliged to commit a large portion of their mobile forces and almost all of their air force to emergency defensive operations including an airlift.

These operations were successful and resulted in inflicting 9,000 enemy casualties at a cost of some 4,000 for the defending forces. The successful defense of these two posts will also, presumably, prevent the enemy from mounting any important offensive in the direction of Laos.

At the same time, the Franco-Vietnamese forces claim to have made some progress in cleaning out enemy forces in the Tonkin delta.

Nevertheless, the balance of operations during the current fighting season does not represent any real progress toward a solution. The enemy is in a position to assume a further initiative. He has, for example, recently initiated an offensive of perhaps two regiment strength in south central Annam.

Factors in Military Stalemate

A memorandum of "Informal Comments on the Military Situation in Indochina", furnished by General Cabell, Director of the Joint Staff,[3] gives the following as major factors in the continuance of the military stalemate:

> "Although the French have been successful in inflicting severe losses on the Viet Minh, and have considerably disrupted the Viet Minh economy, over-all French operations cannot be considered successful because of their failure to arrive at a political solution that obtains the support or patriotism of the Vietnamese people.
>
> "Terrain difficulties, the guerrilla nature of the Viet Minh operations and the political apathy of the population preclude decisive consolidation of areas cleared of Viet Minh, unless these areas are physically occupied by friendly forces. This commitment is beyond the capabilities of the friendly strength.
>
> "Because of lack of cooperation of the Vietnamese people, a large number of Franco-Vietnamese forces are occupying static defense posts within the Tonkin defense territories. If the Vietnamese Government were supported by the people, such posts within the delta could be held by light security or police forces. As long as the people refuse to inform on the Viet Minh hiding in their midst, the Franco-Vietnamese will be incapable of clearing the delta, and while large numbers of Franco-Viet army and navy combat forces are tied down in policing the delta, they will find few opportunities for meeting the enemy in force.
>
> "The French have had considerable success in forcing the dissipation of Viet Minh manpower, but this success in turn has been largely neutralized by the Viet Minh's success in forcing the wide dispersal of Franco-Viet forces. No region in the entire French-held territory can be considered secure against Viet Minh raids and large-scale sabotage."

The memorandum goes on to refer to the failure of the French to conceive a strategy in terms of offensive warfare. "Even their more offensive measures," it states, "are predicated in terms of defensive, i.e., to induce the Viet Minh to attack a well defended French position". Absence of night fighting ability on our side is also mentioned, and, of course, the common land boundary with Communist China makes of the latter country in essence the "Viet Minh rear base and virtual sanctuary".

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[3] The memorandum, dated Jan. 22, was transmitted to Bonsal by Lt. Gen. Charles P. Cabell, USAF, Director of the Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Jan. 23. The document is in PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Defense Memos".

All this adds up under present conditions to a shortage of troops on the Franco-Vietnamese side for the mounting of offensive operations and the assumption of the initiative.

One should not neglect also the factors which prevent the enemy from making progress:

1) General fire superiority and greater mobility of Franco-Vietnamese units as compared with Viet Minh units.
2) Heavy bombing by the French air force of roads used for the movement of supplies, especially from China.
3) Bombing of irrigation works reducing food supply in Viet Minh held territory.
4) Warweariness resulting from failure to reach announced goals and growing strength of French-led forces. American support of the Franco-Vietnamese effort is a factor here.

The enemy is having his troubles with supplies, recruiting and the general political attitudes on his side. A determined offensive could cause him serious difficulty.

Political Situation

So far as the Vietnamese people who are active in the current struggle are concerned, there seems no doubt that the preponderance of leadership, energy and courage is enlisted on the other side. The fact that the forces of Ho Chi Minh, barred as they have been from the major cities and forced to establish their headquarters and bases in unhealthful and remote areas, have held the field for over six years, is a tribute to a very high morale maintained by able political organization.

The record on the Franco-Vietnamese side is far from as good. Since 1946 there have been a number of false starts. It is only in the past two years that a real beginning has been made in the creation on our side of a governmental structure which may hope to have popular appeal. Some progress has been made; some good leaders, such as the Prime Minister Tam and Governor Tri of North Vietnam, are working effectively and seem really to be moving people with them. But without French help and inspiration, the Government of Viet Nam would have a low vitality indeed. Its hold over the people in the areas where it governs is not sufficiently strong.

The elections which were held January 25 represent an important step in the attempt to create a base of popular representation for the regime. The elections have apparently been more successful in this direction than was anticipated and our observers in the field describe them as a real blow to the Viet Minh. Yet the fact is that there is a great deal of apathy in Viet Nam and there is also a large group particularly in intellectual and professional sectors which is consciously "attentiste" allegedly because of a lack of faith in French intentions and possibly also because of doubt as to the outcome of the current hostilities.

The lack of any positive leadership on the part of Bao Dai who is supposed to be the Chief of State reflects the lack of indigenous political dynamism on the non-Communist side; it may also be motivated by doubt as to the West's military potential in Indochina.

Even though there are on the side of the Government of Viet Nam well over 300,000 native soldiers and even though these soldiers can be trained and equipped to the point that they would be technically superior to the Viet Minh, there is no doubt that the latter would have an easy victory if the forces of the French Union were removed from Indochina.

The development of real political vitality on the non-Communist side is essential. It can be stimulated by progress in the military field. And in turn it can create the conditions necessary for further military progress.

This situation of low political vitality prevails in spite of the basic agreements between the French and Vietnamese Governments whereby the latter was granted a measure of independence within the French Union limited, on paper at least, only to the extent strictly necessary because of the inability of the Vietnamese unaided to defend their independence. Thirty-four foreign nations have recognized Viet Nam as an independent state. The qualifications for membership in the United Nations of Viet Nam and of the other Associated States are widely recognized. M. Letourneau stated publicly last summer in Washington that, once the present struggle was over, it would be up to the people of the Associated States to determine their relationship to the French Union. "The French Union," he said, "is not a prison". (We gather that the French authorities in Paris felt that M. Letourneau went a bit far on this occasion; he has made no other statements of this nature.)

Cost of the War

The total money cost in 1953 of the war in Indochina is estimated in the current French budget presentation at the equivalent of $1,680 million, of which $340 million are a French estimate of the value of direct United States end-item aid to Indochina. Of the balance of $1,340 million remaining, the French estimate a contribution of $100 million from Vietnamese sources. This leaves $1,240 million to the carrying of which the French count on over-all United States aid in the amount of perhaps $430 million including the sum of $100 million allegedly promised to Letourneau last June. (For a full discussion of this problem, reference is made to Annex 2 of the French briefing memorandum prepared for the Secretary.)[4]

The fact that the French Government in its budget presentation to the Assembly has apparently allocated a maximum of U.S. aid to Indochina rather than to other objectives is indicative of the importance attached to the amount of that aid as a factor in inducing the Assembly to continue its support of the effort in Indochina.

Perhaps more important even than the financial cost is the extent to which Indochina absorbs the trained military manpower of France. Eight thousand or 26% of Metropolitan France's professional officers in 33,000 or 37% of her professional noncommissioned officers are currently in Indochina. These men serve a twenty-seven months tour of duty there; some are on their third such tour.

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[4] See footnote 4, p. 364.

751G.5/1-2953 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 29, 1953—7 p. m.

1511. Repeated Paris, Hanoi unnumbered. General Salan came to see me yesterday to discuss military situation and prospects. He said that it was absolutely necessary to increase the Viet army by some 40,000 men and he regretted that Bao Dai had sent General Hinh on a useless errand to Paris (from which he only returned today), thereby retarding by several weeks final agreement between French and Viet authorities as to the organization, armament, and financing of the new battalions. However, he thought that agreement would be reached early in February and bulk of the new battalions ready for service in the 1953–1954 campaign. Although Franco-Viet position was stronger than a year ago and would be very considerably improved by the proposed increase in the Viet national army in a few months, he did not expect to be able to "break the back" of Viet Minh forces in 1953–1954 campaign season.

He thought that decisive victories could not be achieved until 1954–1955. To my inquiry whether there was anything that French, Viet, or we might do to speed up action, he said that, if he could get two additional divisions of French troops promptly, this would completely "change the face" of the situation. He had not asked for additional troops from French, since he had taken it for granted his request would be refused because of French obligations under NATO and general French desire to build up a metropolitan army to overbalance that of Germany. He did not agree with this attitude, but did not believe he could change it. The most he felt able to do was to insist that there would be no withdrawals of French expeditionary force during the next year and he felt he had fairly good assurances there would be no withdrawals during that time.

As regards American arms aid, he had for two years requested an additional squadron of F–84's and one of B–26's. He could use another squadron of C–47's. Such additions, of course, would necessitate French Air Force furnishing additional pilots and maintenance crews. When General Lecheres[1] arrived in a few days, he would discuss insistently with him possibility of raising the present ceiling on French aviation personnel in Indochina.

However, for moment further increases in fighters and light bombers was not of great urgency as long as he had the support of the French aircraft carrier *Arromanche.* If he could have two aircraft carriers—with planes—it would be ideal. He was enthusiastic over the contribution made by carrier-based aviation in the Indochinese war. He had one definite request to make of us and that was that the C–47's loaned by the US last Fall for a few months be not taken away at this time. There would be at least two or two and a half months of good weather for land and air operations in north, for which he would need all his transport planes and, after good weather ended, then he expected he would need these planes to transport troops for temporary operations in south. In south it would be possible to carry on military operations through May and he expected at that time to accomplish some extensive cleaning out of the Viet Minh in Cochin China. I reminded him that last August he had said that he thought that would entirely clean out Viet Minh by end of 1953. He said that that was no longer his opinion. A great deal could be done during remainder of year, but he thought that final eradication of Viet Minh in south could not occur before sometime in 1954.

HEATH

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[1] Gen. Charles Léchères, Chief of Staff of the French Air Force.

751G.00/1–2953

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 29, 1953.

Subject: Certain Additional Considerations Regarding Indochina

This memorandum is designed to supplement the two memoranda[2] already sent you regarding Indochina and to submit for your background, but not for use in conversation with the French, certain additional considerations.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] For the two memoranda of Jan. 28, see pp. 363 and 366.

Most recent information from Paris indicates that the French at the highest working level (Alphand of Foreign Office and Clermont-Tonnerre of Finance) are thinking in terms of urging that we give thought to a revision of our legislation which would make a much greater range of French expenditures in Indochina eligible for U.S. assistance than is possible under present legislation. The idea is to find a way in which the Indochina budget can be dealt with in a manner different from and presumably more liberal (from the point of view of U.S. aid) than is the case of France's NATO commitments.

We in FE are increasingly concerned at the time element in relation to the military stalemate in Indochina. It is certain that the French people will not support indefinitely or indeed for perhaps more than another two or three years the current drain in treasure and manpower there. Furthermore, it may well be asked how long the power of decision as to continuing the struggle will remain in French hands. When present plans are carried out the total number of men under arms in Indochina will be well over 900,000 of whom only some 70,000 are French. There is considerable war-weariness there also, compounded with skepticism as to French intentions and abilities. Is it not conceivable that if the present stalemate continues for another couple of years, a "peace formula" might have such appeal to the armed natives on both sides that they would accept and impose a formula which would in effect result in the domination of Indochina by our enemies?

The French army leadership in Indochina is, it is believed, making maximum use of the offensive capabilities at its disposal within the limits of current French military thinking. Nevertheless, on the political side there are factors which perhaps influence adversely French thinking regarding the aggressive conduct of the war. Among these are:

1. The thought that if the Viet Minh were to be really threatened with serious defeat by Franco-Vietnamese successes, the Chinese Communists would invade in force to save their allies and that this would spell disaster for our side. It is difficult to pin the French down on this; we tried when M. Letourneau was here last summer with indifferent success. This thought is related also to the French fear of the effect of an armistice in Korea on Chinese Communist potentialities for action in Indochina and for assisting the Viet Minh.

2. There is a Micawberish feeling in some French circles that somehow "la situation mondiale" will be cleared up and that Indochina will benefit from this. Such a feeling that something will turn up is not conducive to a dynamic approach. This view should be sternly fought; there is no "situation mondiale" apart from the various specific tests of strength, military and political, in which we are engaged.

Any broad solution can only be a reflection of our success or lack of it in these specific contests.

751G.00/1–3153 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State [1]

SECRET SAIGON, January 31, 1953—7 p. m.

1519. Rptd info Paris, Hanoi unnumbered. I saw Bao Dai at Banmethuot yesterday. Director of Imperial Cabinet, Nguyen De, met me and said mysteriously that he was afraid I would find him in state of some "moral depression". De observed it was necessary for French to make clear statement of their intentions here. Then he said, with some circumlocution, that it was also time for Bao Dai to "take hold of things".

In effect, I found Bao Dai in a not very cheerful frame of mind. I referred to his request presented in [*by*] General Hinh to Auriol for support in increasing of both the size and the responsibilities of the Viet National Army. Bao Dai said he has asked that entire military command in the south be turned over to the Vietnamese but that he would not expect to assume such responsibilities until towards the end of the year, since the Vietnamese cadres were not yet ready. I remarked that General Hinh said he thought that they could take over in about six months. Bao Dai said no, that would be impossible before the end of the year. I inquired whether at the same time he would ask that the pacification of the interior of the northern delta be made the sole responsibility of Viet national army. Bao Dai said that would be some time in the future after completion of pacification of the south. He went on to say that until some such large area was turned over to his troops, the Vietnamese people would have no confidence in French promises of independence. He then embarked on long complaint about the delays of French in authorizing formation of Viet army and then, when that was finally decided upon, their hesitations and reluctance to allow it autonomous responsibility in any sectors. The French High Command had promised to form full division in the southern plateau region, but instead of ten battalions, he had been unable to have more than six or seven. He had urged on the French Command the necessity of sending in at least one extra battalion so that they could clean the Vietminh out of Qui Nhon. It could easily have been done year ago when Vietminh were poorly organized in that province. However, the failure to put enough troops in there had allowed the Vietminh organize and maintain attack on Anh Khe last week, which had been repulsed but only after losses of valuable equipment and 300 killed, including one Frenchman and seven Vietnamese officers. Thereupon the French had tardily sent insufficient battalions, but Vietminh had made good their escape. It was doubtful that French would be able to catch up with them in near future.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

I observed that it seemed to me quite possible that French would agree to autonomous Viet responsibility in the south and particularly since the date of taking over was set some time in advance. Bao Dai answered that they would probably agree in principle but they would thereafter throw all kinds of "spokes in the wheel" to prevent its realization. Too many French interests were reluctant to see purely Vietnamese victory in the south. I argued against this attitude but Bao Dai preferred to remain pessimistic. He went on to say that he had obtained more concessions from French than Ho Chi Minh had and by patience and persistence had been successful in progressively extorting further concessions. He had been criticized for not taking over reins of authority and making appeal for national sacrifices, but he could not do so until some such action as taking over exclusive military responsibility in Cochin China would persuade people that sacrifices would really be for national independence.

He asked me what I thought of the elections. He made no comment on my opinion that they had had very good morale and political effect throughout Vietnam. I inquired how rapidly he would move on to having elections for the provincial legislatures and the National Assembly. Bao Dai replied that such steps should be taken only after very careful consideration. There was no point in electing National Assembly and then few months later dismissing it as King of Cambodia had done, because it was not acting in national interest. He observed with some signs of pleasure the King of Cambodia had been too precipitate. (Bao Dai was obviously rather glad over the recent difficulties of his brother Monarch who had been held up to him as an example.) Bao Dai told me that the selections had been practically forced on him by Tam. Tam on December 12 had given press interview stating that communal elections would be held without previous consultation with Bao Dai. Only on December 20 had Tam submitted election decrees for signature.

Bao Dai said that, since in his Tet speeches and in "editorials" on the Dalat Radio, he had announced elections would be held, he was in no position to refuse to sign the decrees, although he thought the matter was being too greatly hurried.

To my inquiry as to his health, he said that he had lost nine kilos as result of the severe treatment he had been undergoing and remarked treatment would last several months more. He said food available in Vietnam was not suitable to build back his strength. Vegetables lacked "quality" (calcium deficiency).

After taking leave of Bao Dai, Nguyen De cornered me and in great secrecy showed me the reply to Bao Dai's letter to President Auriol, which General Hinh had brought back. The letter was couched in polite but not particularly cordial terms, indicated that French Government was disposed to consider increasing both size and responsibilities of Vietnamese army but that the matter could only be decided on ground with HICOM and the French High Command. (Nguyen De evidently took this statement as slap at Bao Dai's action in going over head of HICOM and General Salan to President Auriol.) De then drew my attention to one of the concluding paragraphs which he characterized as bad blunder.

In effect, it said that, while they sympathized with Bao Dai's wishing exercise local area military responsibilities, they suggested that he exercise greater national responsibility and to that end take up prolonged residence in Hanoi. De asserted that such a statement should never have been put in writing. The French of all people should realize the importance of "face" to the oriental. He agreed that Bao Dai should really go to work, but for him now to go Hanoi would seem like giving in to French orders. In effect, the paragraph was an unwise and untactful criticism of Bao Dai's quiescence and was deeply resented by latter.

I agreed with De that it would have been wiser to have made the the suggestion orally. De went on to say, however, that Bao Dai must disregard such annoyances and really go to work. He made suggestion that I should see him more frequently and exhort him to that end.

HEATH

Editorial Note

In his State of the Union Address to Congress, February 2, 1953, President Eisenhower placed the war in Indochina in the context of the struggle against Communism in the Far East and described it as part of the overall effort for Western security. The address read in part as follows:

> "Our policy will be designed to foster the advent of practical unity in Western Europe. The nations of that region have contributed notably to the effort of sustaining the security of the free world. From the jungles of Indochina and Malaya to the northern shores of Europe, they have vastly improved their defensive strength. Where called upon to do so, they have made costly and bitter sacrifices to hold the line of freedom.
>
> . . . .
>
> "In this general discussion of our foreign policy, I must make special mention of the war in Korea.

"This war is, for Americans, the most painful phase of Communist aggression throughout the world. It is clearly a part of the same calculated assault that the aggressor is simultaneously pressing in Indochina and in Malaya, and of the strategic situation that manifestly embraces the island of Formosa and the Chinese Nationalist forces there. The working out of any military solution to the Korean war will inevitably affect all these areas."

For the full text of the address, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1960), pages 12–34.

Editorial Note

On February 2, 1953, John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, and Harold E. Stassen, Director for Mutual Security, met with French officials in Paris. In a morning session, they conferred with Georges Bidault, the French Foreign Minister, and with senior officials of the United States Embassy and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Bidault delivered a statement on various matters of common concern, including the proposed European Defense Community and North Africa. With respect to Asia, he welcomed "belated" recognition by the United States of the French contribution in Indochina. He also asked that United States decisions with regard to China be discussed in advance with France in view of the possible effect on the situation in Indochina. Secretary Dulles spoke to the various points raised by Bidault. In regard to Asia, he said that the United States fully recognized the interrelated character of the Asiatic theaters of conflict and was prepared to hear French views regarding measures to bring the Indochina war to a successful conclusion.

The afternoon session of February 2 was attended by René Mayer, the Premier of France. Mayer delivered a statement on a number of problems, including the question of implementation of the North Atlantic Council resolution of December 17, 1952, recognizing that the French effort in Indochina deserved the support of NATO nations. He emphasized the necessity for increased aid to France for Indochina. In reply to Mayer's remarks on Indochina, Mutual Security Director Stassen drew reference to President Eisenhower's State of the Union Message (see editorial note, *supra*) and indicated that the United States would be very interested in information regarding French plans for training Vietnamese forces.

The two Dulles–Stassen meetings with French leaders of February 2 are described in telegram 4303 from Paris, February 3; for text, see volume V.

In the late afternoon of February 2, Secretary Dulles held a further meeting with Premier Mayer, Foreign Minister Bidault, and Defense Minister René Pleven. Once again, a wide range of issues was discussed. In the course of the meeting, Mayer reiterated the belief of his government in the necessity for reaching an understanding which would make it possible for France to share the burden of the war in Indochina. This session is described in telegram 4294 from London, February 4, printed in volume V.

751G.00/2–453 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, February 4, 1953—3 p. m.

1534. Re Deptel 1381, January 6.[1] This is joint Embassy and STEM message supplementing Embtel 1469, January 23 [*25*] and referring specifically to economic and social reforms proposed Embtel 2218 May 10, 1952.

Since middle May 1952 military developments vis-à-vis STEM projects have been:

1. No change generally in peaceful Laos.
2. One or two irrigation projects in Cambodia have had to be held up because of worsened local security conditions and generally STEM has not been able to extend field activities due continued lack security other than along main routes.
3. STEM has been able to enter certain areas in South Vietnam where it had not been able to operate before, but in North Vietnam it has had to withdraw from certain areas particularly in Thai country and in the southern delta. One American X-ray apparatus, several minor pieces of equipment and some medical supplies have been lost to the Viet-Minh.

In the economic and social fields, greatest weakness in all three governments is weak administration. In Vietnam it is true that Tam has:

1. Under French expert, established public administration school but with enrollment of only 50 to be graduated in two and one-half years.
2. Segregated administratively the Ministry of Finance and Reconstruction and the Ministry of Economic Affairs for greater efficiency and to lessen burden of responsibility which formerly weighed on the one minister of the combined organization (Lai).[2]
3. Passed labor code and trade union law permitting existing unions to freely engage in union activities (formerly restrained by Ordonnance 10) and the formation of new unions. No union yet officially

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[1] See footnote 2, p. 354.

[2] Nguyen Huy Lai, Minister of Finance.

registered but period allowed for existing unions is three months from promulgation of law. Several new unions reportedly organized. Membership of Confederation Vietnamienne du Travail Cretien considerably expanded.

4. Under French expert set up agricultural credit institution, but no loans will probably be made for several months.

5. Under French expert published first national budget.

6. Taken measures to control rice speculation by: imposition of export embargo; lifting of military blockade of Trans-Bassac; requiring semi-monthly declarations of stocks held by individuals; proposing export tax on rice at inter-governmental conference (blocked by Cambodia); rice stock cumulation by government to prevent future market shortages and price spiralling.

But Tam has still not:

1. Really instituted land subdivision features of agrarian reform, although ordering census of free communal lands and non-utilized land for eventual distribution.

2. Revamped fiscal system to ensure greater receipts for military budget upon basis of progressive taxes, but has imposed national defense tax and constituted National Committee for Fiscal and Tax Reforms.

3. Taken thorough-going action to curtail corruption and impose austerity on officials at least, through affecting changes in personnel.

4. Developed fully detailed national budget, nor published existing regional ones, nor issued any post-year accounting statement.

5. Due to financial hegemony of French, has been unable to do anything effective to encourage investment of local capital—French generally prefer transfer profits to France (to extent permitted by Office des Change) rather than reinvest in risky Indochina market.

6. Prepared any basic investment plan. In this respect Laos and Cambodia have been more progressive and French have still not:

   1. Given Embassy or STEM sufficiently detailed data on vitally important BIP or on activities of French-Associated States total war mobilization committees works.

   2. Sufficiently curtailed transfer heavy profits of French to France.

   3. Encouraged thorough-going tax reform largely because French fear that tax reforms might be so administered that burden of payments would fall on French but not on Chinese or Vietnamese.

   4. Adopted any program toward encouraging increased Associated States nationals participation in local French societies which dominate economy.

   5. Assumed initiative in encouraging utilization MSA and MDAP fund for development local military or para-military industries. Only today the Vietnamese Minister of Public Works, Le Quang Huy, told chief of STEM he had discussed this question with Pleven during his recent visit to France and that Pleven was decidedly unenthusiastic. Huy believed that French would not voluntarily permit Vietnam to manufacture its own small arms since France wished to hold this monopoly itself for control

purposes. However, questions of economic feasibility and justifiable end result must be primary considerations which have not yet been studied adequately. On the other hand the French have:

1. As indicated above, assisted Vietnam with experts in the fields of public administration training, agricultural credit institutions and national budgeting.
2. Indicated that they would establish a social and economic mission to the Associated States and, if Parliament voted credits, would appropriate approximately two or three billion francs for public works and other projects.
3. Continued to staff most key technical positions in Laos and PMS and, to a large extent, in Cambodia.

Perhaps economic and social administration governments can best be summarized as having shown some improvement but not enough in comparison with need for reforms and speed in implementing them. As in French and Vietnamese business circles in government circles attitude of "business as usual" appears more prevalent than "victory first". This would be serious even if the US were not contributing largely to the governments of Indochina, but under present circumstances it means that the US taxpayer is having to pay more than he would be called upon to do if the Associated States and French public and civil administrators could be inspired to greater effort and austerity.

The program of action suggestion for American economic aid as outlined in May still appears valid with the following exceptions:

1. Effort in north should be concentrated toward civil pacification with STEM activities largely decentralized. Inauguration this program will be greatly aided by presence of Mr. Hendrick in Hanoi.[3]
2. During this next six months US should attempt clarify, if necessary at highest levels, question of circumstances, if any, under which French would welcome Associated States requesting technical assistance.
3. US should push more strongly than in the past for (*a*) land reform (*b*) tax reform. Up to the present entrenched interests appear to discourage progress in these fields. As long as US unwilling insist on reasonable assignment technical experts to Associated States and upon reasonable program land redistribution, it is fighting in the economic field at a disadvantage.
4. Attempt secure integration MSA-financed program with that financed by local governments, i.e., joint planning of projects on basis of total joint funds available.
5. Consider, if possible under two above, educational assistance in training doctors, engineers and agricultural experts. Competent local professional personnel woefully inadequate and unless they can be quickly trained at college level full value other investments under

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[3] James Hendrick, Special Representative in Hanoi of the Special Technical and Economic Mission (MSA) in Indochina.

American aid cannot be realized. Hospitals and irrigation systems do not run themselves.

6. Continue encourage Associated States utilize STEM technical assistance in public administration field.

7. Encourage long-range development of export industries and assistance to artisanal industry although clearance with French at highest levels may be necessary.

STEM has not been and is not satisfied that it is achieving as much benefit as possible for each dollar allocated to Indochina. Unless the Associated States and particularly French are willing accept US technical assistance with as disinterested good faith as it is being rendered, our range of possible economic assistance will continue to be limited and therefore cannot be expected obtain maximum results. But, even if maximum results possible it should by now be clear that Indochina war cannot be won thereby. In the final analysis military and political action are more indispensable than any economic program.

HEATH

751G.11/2–453 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, February 4, 1953—6 p. m.

1542. Repeated information Paris 222, Hanoi unnumbered. News story written by visiting Scripps Howard correspondent Russell and filed without censorship difficulties February 1 elicited oral protest from President Tam on grounds of inaccuracy and alleged insults to Chief of State. Protest has since been confirmed in writing, with request that it be transmitted to appropriate American authorities. Article in question describes Bao Dai and his activities in singularly unflattering terms while praising Tam for his energy and honesty and singling out elections as source of recent boost in latter's popularity, which in author's opinion might eventually lead to his replacing Bao Dai as Chief of State.

I have replied both orally and in writing to Tam that his protest would be transmitted to Washington, while reminding him of American free press tradition. From standpoint of President Tam article is most inopportune at this moment when Bao Dai's wounded *amour-propre* and ill-concealed fears of eventual installation of what has been described as "second legitimacy" resulting from elections oblige Tam to walk on eggs in dealing with his imperial master. If article is reported back to Bao Dai, with its invidious personal comparison of Emperor and President and particularly with its open implication is candidate to succeed Bao Dai, reaction in hypersensitive atmosphere of Banmethuot can easily be imagined. It will further complicate

Tam's difficulties in keeping Viet ship of state on reasonably even keel and possibly influence Bao Dai to give progressively chillier reception to Tam's proposals with respect to subsequent installments of electoral machinery. My written reply to Tam's protest will at least enable him to produce it as earnest of his own sincerity and good intentions if taken to task on this score by Bao Dai.

HEATH

751G.00/2–453

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs (Hoey)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 4, 1953.

Subject: Current Developments in Indochina

Participants:	DMS—Messrs. Tannenwald and Paul MSA—Mr. Bunting[1] S/MSA—Mr. Martin S/P—Messrs. Ferguson and Stelle FE—Mr. Allison PSA—Messrs. Bonsal, Hoey, Laukhuff	Brig. Gen. Trapnell, Chief, MAAG, Saigon

During a discussion on February 2, 1953, General Trapnell, who has been on short consultation in Washington, and who is returning to Indochina February 3rd, discussed various aspects of the Indochina situation.

General Trapnell spoke in an optimistic vein regarding the general situation, making the points that the Franco–Vietnamese forces, particularly if increased by new units now under consideration, would probably have the capability of breaking the back of the Viet Minh within about eighteen months. He characterized French tactics as being "too conservative", but felt that the increase of approximately 40,000 men in the Viet-Nam National Army now being considered should enable the Franco–Vietnamese forces to achieve substantial victories. He further believed that while success in Indochina would not be achieved *solely* through military means, military successes would be a necessary prerequisite to political progress.

He said that it had been apparent for some time that additional Vietnamese forces would be required in order to achieve victories and that at least three different plans for enlarging the Viet-Nam National Army had been developed. General Trapnell did not know what the final plan would be, but stated that it was to have been pouched from Saigon on the 28th of January[2] and should be in Washington shortly. He mentioned that this plan would be tentative in that it had not yet been approved by the French military authorities in Paris. General Trapnell believed that there would be sufficient funds in the FY 1953–54 MDAP Program to supply all of the armament for the contemplated forces, but he felt the cost of paying and maintaining the troops would be beyond the combined abilities of France and Viet-Nam and that the United States would be called upon to supply funds toward that purpose. He did not know how this could be arranged, but hoped that a solution could be found. He contemplated the additional forces would be approximately 40,000 men organized into 57 battalions with 19 heavy weapons companies.[3]

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[1] Frederick H. Bunting, Chief of the China–Indochina Division, Mutual Security Agency.

He discussed the difficulty in finding suitable officer candidates for the Viet-Nam National Army and drew a parallel with his own experience in Korea. He said that the Korean Army had expanded from 50,000 up to 250,000 in a comparatively short time even though qualified American Army officers a few years ago had stated that Koreans could not be made into soldiers. He referred to the fact that in the Korean Army there were Corps commanders in their 20s. Under questioning he made the observation that he did not feel the United States should participate in the training of the Viet-Nam National Army. In the first place, he was sure that the French were better equipped, due to language facilities and experience in Indochina, to do that job.

When questioned as to whether or not a political solution would not first be necessary before a military decision could be successful, he replied in the negative. Military victories, particularly if participated in by units of the Viet-Nam National Army, he felt, would have, as he stated in his opening résumé, a desirable political result which would tend to draw the country together. It would attract persons not now supporting or participating in the Government of Viet-Nam.

He stated that he was not informed in advance of French tactical operations, except sufficiently in advance to be on the spot when they took place. This usually meant a day or two in advance.

When questioned as to his views on the MSA Program in Tonkin, he expressed the general view that it seemed an excessively expensive method of protecting the population (he referred here to Governor Tri's for fortifying villages). He said even if you could put 300,000 people into fortified areas, you still had a total population of 7 million to worry about.

He felt that the Vietnamese made good soldiers and that many units of the Viet-Nam Army had fought well. He mentioned that desertions from the National Army had been more heavy in areas of the South where they were not engaged in combat than in the combat areas in Tonkin.

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[2] Not identified.

[3] General Trapnell's views on the expansion of the Vietnamese army were set forth in his letter of Dec. 20, 1952 to Gen. J. Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff; for text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 2–8.

He felt that there would be a distinct advantage to having French officers visit Korea in order to observe American and ROK training methods and that General Allard had favored such a visit. He had not mentioned to General Allard, however, the inclusion of any Vietnamese officers in such a survey party. He mentioned that there were very few Viet-Nam National Army officers of field grade.

He referred in generally complimentary terms to General Hinh, but stated that General Hinh had had little opportunity to demonstrate any administrative ability.

General Trapnell agreed with views expressed by participants that the stalemate worked to the advantage of the enemy and that it would be necessary for the French High Command to adopt more aggressive tactics in order to achieve successes during calendar 1953–54, rather than planning long range operations beyond that date.

He mentioned that the French Air Force in Indochina operated at about one-half the capacity of similar U.S. Air Force units but did not know if this was the usual comparative ability of French and U.S. units say, for example, in Europe. He strongly felt that an addition of about 3,000 pilots and crews over and above the present 10,000 personnel ceiling in Indochina might almost double the capacity of the existing U.S. aircraft which we had provided for Indochina. He felt that such personnel additions should be made by the French. He mentioned that in Korea a typical U.S. airplane would have two crews assigned and would fly over 100 hours a month; in Indochina, .9 crews were assigned per airplane and 40 hours was considered a high number of flying hours per month.

Mr. Allison concluded the meeting by expressing the appreciation of all the participants for General Trapnell's comprehensive and frank appraisal of the situation in Indochina.

790.00/2–453

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 4, 1953.

Subject: Discussion of Far Eastern Questions

Participants: Admiral Arthur W. Radford, USN
John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State

Admiral Radford called this morning and spent something over an hour in the general discussion of Far Eastern matters. The following is a brief summary by topics of the subjects upon which he expressed an opinion.

Indo-China. Admiral Radford stated that he had sent a highly qualified Marine Colonel, who was a graduate of the French Artillery School, to Indo-China recently with a small group of officers to make a study of the situation and to deliver to General Salan certain verbal communications which he did not wish to put in writing. These had mainly to do with questions as to why the offensive action, which General Salan had informed Admiral Radford during the latter's visit to Indo-China last October would be forthcoming, had not taken place. As a result of this survey Admiral Radford has come to two conclusions, one of them optimistic and one pessimistic. The first is that under present conditions, with present material and manpower and if already obligated U.S. assistance continues, it should be impossible for the Vietminh forces to throw the French out of the Tonkin Delta. While French officers state that if the Chinese Communists should attack in force in conjunction with the Vietminh the French Union forces could hold out for 30 days in the Haiphong area, Admiral Radford and his staff believe that if there was a determined will to resist that the French forces could hold out almost indefinitely and make the situation very difficult for the Communists. This might require some American aid in the form of air and naval support, but in Admiral Radford's opinion the French Union forces might be able to do it alone. The pessimistic conclusion to which the Admiral had come was that unless the French radically change their outlook and adopt a much more aggressive spirit than now prevailing, they would not be able to bring the present campaign to a successful conclusion. According to the Admiral, the Marine Colonel stated that two good American divisions with the normal American aggressive spirit could clean up the situation in the Tonkin Delta in 10 months. The French military apparently is dominated by a defensive type of thinking with the result that they do not take sufficient risks nor do they follow through when they have achieved some initial success.

Admiral Radford did, however, state that some fault lay on the American side, particularly with respect to the furnishing of airplanes and spare parts. Too often the United States had furnished planes and an initial supply of spare parts and then had forgotten about the matter with the result that a year later the planes again needed to be overhauled and new parts were not available. Admiral Radford suggested several possible remedies to this situation:

1. The establishment in Indo-China of large replacement depots under skilled American direction;
2. The manufacture of the necessary spare parts in Japan;

3. The possible manufacture of some such parts in Formosa where the Chinese already have made considerable progress in this type of activity.

It was the Admiral's belief that if the United States was to continue to pour in large amounts of assistance to Indo-China, it was essential that we take a more hardboiled attitude with the French in order to get them to adopt a more aggressive policy. According to the Admiral, some of the top officers in Indo-China were anxious to adopt such a policy but apparently are prevented from doing so by instructions from above, presumably from Paris.

[Here follows discussion of other subjects.]

751G.5/2–653 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT SAIGON, February 6, 1953—7 p. m.

1566. Eyes only Allison from Heath. No distribution outside Dept. Deptel 1606, February 3.[1] In my opinion, there should be absolutely no reduction in transport plane availability in Indochina during next few months at least. After May and through October, there will be the rainy and flooded season when it would be impossible for French to effect simultaneous parachute drop of three battalions. But until the end of May (during which month operations in south Viet may still be feasible, possibly involving all available transport planes) the opportunity may present itself for General Salan to execute advantageously a simultaneous three battalion parachute drop probably to recapture Dien Bien Phu. With Lai Chau and Nasan now strongly fortified, the recapture of Dien Bien Phu would enable him to dispute Viet Minh control of Thai country and protect Laos. Other opportunities may also present themselves in north and center in next two months for maximum parachute operations.

To be sure, Salan can give no certain assurances that there will be operations involving the simultaneous use of the 100 transport planes of which he now disposes. He is not fully utilizing these planes at present moment. Nevertheless, if our policy is for French to work toward decisive victory in Indochina as soon as possible, they should not be short the necessary armament, of which transport planes are a most important item.

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[1] Telegram 1606 to Saigon, Feb. 3, 1953, read as follows:

"Eyes only Ambassador Heath from Allison. Arrangements under which additional C–47 transport planes were made available last fall for use in Indochina are expiring and desirability of extension if possible must be considered. Trapnell familiar with recent information available to MAAG and Defense. Please discuss with him and let us have recommendation on basis local situation.

"Should we contemplate reduction in transport plane availability in Indochina at this time?" (751G.5/2–353)

It will be recalled that last fall we loaned 21 extra C–47's and helped persuade the French to lend another 29 on Salan's statement that he needed them to undertake offensive airborne operations in early November. Viet Minh, however, got jump on French by initiating operations in Thai country resulting in fall of Nghia Lo and Dien Bien Phu. Salan was therefore unable to make the offensive use of the transport planes he—and we—had hoped. Instead he elected to fortify the airstrip at Nasan. Nasan was almost entirely manned and supplied by airlift and during the days preceding the attack, during the attack and for a short time thereafter, all French transport planes, including the 50 additional ones, were in constant use, one should say in overuse. These planes can be said, therefore, to have made possible the defensive operation at Nasan and they actually saved Nasan against Viet Minh attacks which were quite bloodily repulsed.

However, General Salan figures that he will probably not be able to get an extension of the loan of these 50 planes and is willing to settle for keeping 30 of them. Of the 29 C–47's furnished by French, 20 are committed under NATO and 6 of them have recently been sent back. The other 9 planes are needed for pilot training in France. French have ordered him to return all 29 planes by end of February, although there has been some indication he might retain 4. General Lecheres, Chief of Staff French Air Force, has just arrived and Letourneau arrived this morning. Salan is going to endeavor to persuade them to cancel the order for return of these planes but realizes that he may be unsuccessful, since French Defense Ministry which, he says, is more "NATO-minded than Indochina-minded" may prove adamant. He knows also that French cannot take away or fail to return matériel which is committed under NATO with [*without*] the consent of other NATO members, particularly the US. American Air Force has also called for return of 21 planes it lent on grounds, I understand, that they will be needed in Korean operations. I venture opinion from here that in present quasi-stalemate in Korea those planes are not needed by Air Force. For example, the Air Force has under charter several planes of CAT. Since they have to use these a minimum number of hours per month, they have grounded certain Air Force planes because there is not enough transport duty to use latter. Of course, if Korean operations are to be intensified or expanded in the immediate future, it might well be that the return of these 21 planes would be necessary.

Any decision to extend the term of the loan of these planes may meet with the opposition of the Air Section of MAAG which is inclined, I think, to take a rather narrow attitude toward French requests. The Air Section of MAAG quite properly points out that when USAF lent these planes to French, it was on the understanding that French would furnish sufficient pilots and maintenance crews. French furnished first but have been unable, and probably will be for some time, to furnish full maintenance, according to American standards, of the transport planes they now have. At the present time, in fact, to repair and overhaul the planes now used we have had to fly in a temporary maintenance group of 25 Americans now operating at Nhatrang. Air Section of MAAG estimates that the French maintenance forces can only maintain a total of about 65 transport planes in addition to its work of keeping up French fighter and bomber squadrons. They are inclined to make invidious comparisons of relatively full utilization of our transport planes in Korea with what they term "under-utilization" of transport planes by French Indochinese Command. General Trapnell and I both agreed last summer that the Air Section of MAAG seemed rather to miss the point. Our support of the loan of extra planes to French was not in expectation that they would be used steadily, but that they would be available when good opportunities for maximum parachute troop and supply operations presented themselves. The question of insufficient maintenance according to ideal standards is a secondary one. It could be solved by keeping on for awhile the American maintenance group temporarily detailed here or by making arrangements with a commercial company for maintenance. CAT, for example, for two years has suggested leasing both planes and maintenance facilities here and their offer still stands. Since CAT is too tied up in the French mind with Nationalist China, Willaue of CAT is quite willing to form a Delaware corporation under another name to provide up to say six planes and maintenance facilities and crews (the latter would be mainly Chinese, however, from Formosa). CAT states that crews and facilities could be in Indochina in 6 months if Defense Department gives priorities for certain articles of machinery.

I suggest you get in touch with General Trapnell who at present is still on consultation in Washington where he can be reached care of General Eddleman, G–3,[2] Department of Army.

Foregoing telegram has not been shown to MAAG or Service Attachés.

HEATH

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[2] Maj. Gen. Clyde D. Eddleman, Assistant Chief of Staff, G–3, Operations, U.S. Army.

751G.5/2–753 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, February 7, 1953—noon.

1568. Eyes only Allison. No distribution outside Department. Regarding Embassy telegram 1566, February 6. General Lecheres, Chief Staff French Air Force, has arrived Saigon and called on me yesterday evening. He said his Ministry must withdraw the 29 planes lent last fall, since part were definitely committed under NATO and rest absolutely necessary for pilot training. They would be gradually phased back to France, the last to be there by mid-April. He said not only were these planes needed in France, but he needed pilots for NATO or for instruction purposes. French did not have enough transport pilots to keep 100 crews, as at present, in Indochina.

Air Ministry, however, would be willing leave 20 or 25 flight crews provided United States would leave at least for several months the 21 planes we loaned last fall. He said that MAAG and Embassy would shortly receive request from Letourneau to this effect.[1]

Lecheres not only insisted that French requirements under NATO and for training could not legally be sacrificed in favor of expanded operations here, but he insisted on the at least equal importance of reconstruction of metropolitan army as against expanded operations Indochina. He said time had passed when France or any other European country could hope build up sufficient separate military force or military industry. Western Europe military union was an absolute necessity.

Only solution to increase and accelerate operations in Indochina, Lecheres declared, was expand Vietnamese national army, including national air force. He thought that by 1954 there could be Vietnamese air force which could make a certain contribution.

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[1] In telegram 1643 to Saigon, Feb. 10, Assistant Secretary of State Allison informed Ambassador Heath that he shared his concern regarding transport plane availability and that the Department of Defense had been asked to examine the question. (751G.5/2–753) In telegram 4454 to Paris, Feb. 17, the Department indicated that it tended to the view that nothing should be done to decrease transport availability in Indochina during the dry season ending in May. The Embassy was asked to supply information regarding French Government consideration of the problem. (751G.5/2–1753)

In telegram 4695 to Paris, Mar. 3 (also sent to Saigon as telegram 1765), the Department reported that the U.S. Air Force had extended by 1 month the loan period of 21 C–47s still in Indochina which were to have been returned on Mar. 1. The Embassies were asked to approach French authorities in support of the request being made by the Military Assistance Advisory Groups in Paris and Saigon that 15 aircraft on loan from NATO also be allowed to remain in Indochina. (751G.5/3–353) The Embassy in Paris reported raising the matter with the Foreign Ministry in telegram 4917 from Paris, Mar. 4. (751G.5/3–453) In telegram 5169 from Paris, Mar. 21, the Embassy further reported that according to an official of the Foreign Ministry, French Ambassador Henri Bonnet had been instructed to take up the question of planes in Washington and to indicate that French NATO requirements prevented the retention of NATO-loaned aircraft in Indochina. Bonnet was also to request the extension of the loan of U.S. planes. (751.G.5/3–2153)

None of the documents cited is printed.

I remarked that I assumed that the policy of France as well as that of United States, continued [to be] to bring hostilities in Indochina to successful conclusion at earliest possible moment. To that statement he raised question whether it was desirable to arrive at destruction of Viet-Minh forces at too early date since it might involve Chinese invasion.

I find this very disquieting and, if Rene Mayer visits Washington,[2] we must certainly ascertain whether there is definite policy or tacit understanding within French Government not to prosecute war too aggressively in Indochina. Nearly 18 months ago De Lattre thought he could break back of Viet-Minh resistance within year and half or two years. Since his death, there has been no one either in French high command or in French Government making any definite or determined predictions regarding duration of war here. General Trapnell has idea that by increasing Vietnamese regulars and auxiliary troops this year the French, under command willing to take more risks and losses, could "break the back" of Viet-Minh resistance during the 1953–54 fighting season. Salan will only go so far as to say that nothing like that could happen before 1954–55.

HEATH

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[2] During the Paris phase of his European trip, Feb. 1–3, Secretary of State Dulles, on behalf of President Eisenhower, extended an invitation to Premier Mayer to visit the United States. The dates for Mayer's trip to Washington were later set for Mar. 26, 27, and 28.

751G.00/2–1053: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, February 10, 1953—7 p. m.

1588. Rptd info Paris unn, Hanoi unn. Reuters correspondent Fawcett has given Embassy officer additional details concerning group of prisoners recently liberated by Viet Minh, as reported in Embtel 1477 January 26.[1] Fawcett managed to gain access to returnees at hospital outside Saigon by combination of chance and ingenuity and later succeeded in getting his despatch passed by censor, in spite of almost pathological sensitivity of French military on this score. This attitude is not incomprehensible in light of fantastic comments made by returnees, who have obviously been subjected to intensive dose of "brain washing" along classic Communist lines.

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[1] Telegram 1477 from Saigon, Jan. 26, not printed, dealt with press reports of the release of a group of French prisoners by the Viet Minh. (751G.00/1–2653)

Group in question was almost entirely composed insofar as French are concerned of ordinary soldiers or civilians and included no officers, professional men or people with background of higher education and training. Fawcett commented that they were obviously less well-equipped to withstand insidious pressure of Communist indoctrination and "re-education" than officers or representatives of professional and intellectual classes would have been. Result is that they apparently swallowed hook, line and sinker everything they were told over period of six years or more.

When asked, for example, how they felt about being liberated at last, several members of group replied that as early as first year of their imprisonment they knew they would never be liberated by French Army but only thanks to generosity of their captors. They proved to be remarkably well-informed about all events which could be interpreted as Allied reverses and Communist successes, such as eviction of British from Iran, and totally ignorant of strength of free world and France's contribution thereto. They apparently were able to receive English lessons at some time during their long incarceration, but with the *Daily Worker* as primary text. *L'Humanité* likewise figured on their list of required reading. They expressed great interest in all they had been able to learn in this way and, according to Fawcett, seemed pathetically unaware of the monstrous hoax perpetrated upon them.

If such groups are to be liberated from time to time, they would pose serious problem for French, who can scarcely allow these returnees to be turned loose into waiting arms of French Communist Party without drastic re-indoctrination and relatively long period of moral and physical build-up to enable them to recover at least some measure of true perspective.

HEATH

751G.00/2-1953

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur) [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 19, 1953.

Subject: Proposed working group to examine situation with respect to Indochina.

Participants: The Secretary
Douglas MacArthur II
The French Ambassador, M. Bonnet

During Ambassador Bonnet's call on the Secretary this morning he made reference to a memo which his Embassy had left at the Department yesterday (original is attached and a copy has gone to Mr. Allison).[2] The memo in question refers to an agreement undertaken by Mr. Acheson on December 18, 1952 to have a US working group meet with French representatives either in Paris or Saigon to examine the situation with respect to Indochina, and particularly the French needs and requirements there. Ambassador Bonnet said that the French governmental crisis and then the change in US administration had both worked to prevent such a meeting. The French Government was most desirous that such a meeting occur prior to Mr. Mayer and Mr. Bidault's visit to Washington late in March so that when the French ministers met with the top people in the US Government in Washington their talks can be fruitful.

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[1] The substance of this memorandum was transmitted to Paris as telegram 4589 (telegram 1731 to Saigon), Feb. 25. (751G.5/2-2553)

The Secretary inquired whether the French envisaged such a meeting taking place in Saigon or Paris. Ambassador Bonnet replied that originally they had envisaged Saigon but in view of the time element and the distance, Paris would perhaps be most suitable. In reply to a specific question from the Secretary, Mr. Bonnet said that the French were prepared to undertake these conversations whenever the US could get its working group over to Paris. The French, he said, understand that the working group will be composed of representatives of the State Department, MSA and Defense Department.

The Secretary said that he knew this question was being studied and that he hoped to be able to inform Ambassador Bonnet in the next two or three days as to our views on the proposed meeting.[3]

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[2] The memorandum, which requested that a U.S. working group be sent to Paris or Saigon prior to Premier Mayer's visit to Washington in late March, is not printed. (751G.00/2-1853)

[3] In telegram 4652 to Paris, Feb. 27 (repeated to Saigon for information as telegram 1751), the Department of State indicated that the working group would proceed to Paris on about Mar. 7. The French Embassy in Washington was being kept advised. The Department also stated that the initial working group discussions were viewed as a purely technical, factfinding exercise with policy questions to be deferred to a later date. (751G.5/2-2653)

751G.00/2-2153 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, February 21, 1953—9 a. m.

1661. Repeated information Hanoi unnumbered, Paris unnumbered. Joint Embassy STEM message. Chief of STEM[1] and I called on President Tam February 18 to discuss several accumulated problems:

1. *Technical Assistance.*

Subject associated with offer help in staffing a national economic council and planning board. Tam appreciated information supplied regarding similar institutions Thailand and Laos but indicated due basic accord with French question American technicians delicate. President stated firmly no question at all that American experts should be employed by STEM supervise US-financed projects, but Tam clearly implied government unable accept technicians not associated with projects thus excluding experts in field public administration, tax reform, statistical services et cetera. Since clarification Vietnam stand this question considered vital future planning STEM, we left *aide-mémoire*[2] previously discussed with Janot, director Letourneau's cabinet.

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[1] Frederic P. Bartlett, First Secretary of the Embassy and Chief of the Mutual Security Agency Mission at Saigon.

Comment: STEM and Embassy would appreciate MSA/W and State's reaction this situation particularly whether we should continue push for acceptance non-project associated technicians. If Washington believes question should not be considered closed, we recommend further discussions with French at possibly Washington or Paris level. Possible [*Possibly*] wisest course might be consider supplying this type technician definitely French responsibility now possible of implementation through new French economic and technical mission.

2. *Gocong Land Reclamation Project.*

We suggested that before this project commenced Vietnam should consider the following:

(*a*) Instituting land reform within area since considerable part of it held by large proprietors. Tam response not too definite but he indicated that he was already in touch with one or two of the owners.

(*b*) Applying 1947 landlord-tenant law for Cochin China which provides generally for 40 percent of harvest as payment by tenant instead of actual payments roughly 50 percent. Tam explained he considered the 1947 law not in effect, had asked Agriculture Minister Quy to revise and simplify it, latter had become too involved in study land laws other countries, and he himself had undertaken draft new legislation.

(*c*) Instituting some form capital increment assessment tax. Tam's first reaction was better to continue old system of relying upon normal reassessment of land with consequently increased real estate tax returns. When I pointed out that special assessment tax could also be applied urban improvement, President was considerably interested.

Comment: Fact President feels only he can draft landlord-tenant law indicates certain lack of confidence in his associates and of technicians in government. His reaction applying land reform tends confirm our impression that Tam wishes handle agricultural reform on highly personalized basis. If this is true, difficult see how it can be quickly implemented or objectively administered.

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[2] Not identified.

3. *Trainees.*

We noted Tam had reduced trainee candidates proposed by Ministers of Public Works and Agriculture from six each to three each. Tam explained Vietnam so short of technicians he could not authorize their leaving their posts although he did not object to having even "300" young students given scholarships for study in the States.

Comment: We sympathize with President's desire not lose even temporarily any of the too few even semi-trained technicians which government now has, but believe in long run this will prove short-sighted policy.

4. *Dong Quan Pacification Project.*

Tam highly critical this scheme contrasting it unfavorably with much cheaper project which he wanted develop with US help on edge of Plaine des Joncs but willing Tri finish project in order prove whether it will actually be successful or not. Bartlett took occasion inform President Tam that STEM mission maintains completely neutral position in any such matter where differences of opinion exist within the government.

Comment: STEM and Embassy realize Dong Quan calculated risk, but urge Governor Tri be allowed finish his experiment since no other form civil pacification has yet proved successful in delta. Fuller report by airgram.

General comment: Bartlett and I believe discussion most useful in clarifying issues. Certainly indicative degree to which policy decisions are concentrated in office of President himself and explains one reason for delays often encountered in getting action.

HEATH

751G.5/2–2153 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 21, 1953—4 p. m.

1665. Repeated information Paris, Hanoi unnumbered. I presented Mr. Brayton Wilbur, Chief of Stassen's MSA Mission,[1] to Letourneau yesterday.

(1) I brought conversation around to exchange rate. Letourneau admitted that it would be in interest of France to devalue the piastre but insisted that it would be presently impossible in view of opposition of AS to such a move. He then admitted frankly that there would also be objection on the part of both French military and civilian personnel in IC since the present [rate] allowed them to send larger

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[1] Brayton Wilbur, President of the Wilbur Ellis Company of San Francisco was Team Leader of a four-man Mutual Security Agency evaluation mission on visit in Indochina. MSA dispatched similar missions to a number of posts during February 1953.

remittances for savings and/or maintenance of families in France. (*Comment*: The objection of the AS to devaluation of the piastre is a real obstacle.) We do not find much merit in Letourneau's contention that for purposes of morale of French military and civilian personnel present rate must be maintained. Since their pay is eventually computed in francs they could receive a larger sum in local currency if the piastre were devalued. As the McDiarmid report [2] indicates special arrangements could be made for the remittances of French personnel.

(2) Letourneau said the French were in full agreement with necessity of increasing the Vietnam National army by 40,000 men during CY 1953 and were in near agreement as to giving greater autonomous area responsibilities to national army.[3] He had told the French general staff that they must go as far as possible in meeting Vietnam demands on that score to the point of not imperiling French military security. The latest Vietnamese proposal made by General Hinh was described by Letourneau as "realistic". It did not call for placing all of Cochinchina under Vietnamese military command. Hinh asked the French to retain responsibility for the Cambodian-Vietnamese frontier, the area controlled by the Cao Daists and the region north of Saigon where there are still fairly considerable Viet Minh forces.

(3) Letourneau went on to say that while there was agreement on increasing Viet Minh [*Vietnam*] National army question of financing this increase presented an unsolved problem. I countered with the statement that it was my understanding that under available French appropriations and counting on a greater fiscal effort on the part of the Vietnamese Government the financing of 40,000 increase was assured for 1953. Letourneau, somewhat reluctantly, admitted this but said that real problem would come in 1954. He admitted that the Vietnamese army was too expensive but said that it was impossible during wartime to reduce the pay. The Vietnamese army had been started as a professional army which naturally costs more than a conscript army. New troops might be conscripted but they could not be paid less than the enlisted professional soldier when they were performing the same duties and incurring the same risks.

(4) Letourneau insisted very strongly that the political and military situation in Cambodia presented no problem at this time. France

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[2] Reference is to a report titled "The Exchange Rate Problem in the Associated States of Indochina," prepared by Orville J. McDiarmid of the MSA Mission in the Philippines on the basis of research in Indochina. A draft copy of this report dated Feb. 10, 1953, was transmitted to Washington as an enclosure to despatch 385 from Saigon, Mar. 17, 1953, not printed. (851G.131/3-1753)

[3] On Feb. 24, the French-Vietnamese High Military Committee meeting at Dalat decided to expand the Vietnamese Army by approximately 40,000 men, primarily by creating a substantial number of purely Vietnamese commando units. It was also decided to turn certain areas over to Vietnamese forces and to increase the authority of local Vietnamese authorities. Among those participating in the meeting were Bao Dai, Premier Tam, Chief of Staff Hinh, Minister Letourneau, and General Salan.

and Cambodia were fortunate in having General Langlade as commander of the Franco-American [*Khmer*] forces. Langlade was an unusual general who while very active did not believe in fighting useless battles. Instead he was effectively regrouping, resettling and organizing for self defense the populations in areas subject to Viet Minh infiltration.

HEATH

851G.131/2–2653 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dunn) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, February 26, 1953—7 p. m.

4798. Repeated information Saigon 185. Limit distribution. This is joint Embassy/MSA Mission telegram. Regarding Deptel 4534, February 20, repeated Saigon 1719.[1]

1. Evidence is conclusive that present 17 franc rate considerably overvalues piaster and that, to an extent which it is hard to express in quantitative terms, this overvaluation results in inflation franc costs Indochinese war. Nevertheless, Embassy finds it difficult, because of extremely complex political and psychological aspects this problem, to arrive at firm judgment as to what policy United States ought to adopt without fuller idea of viewpoints French and Associated States. Accordingly, our recommendations as requested reference telegram regarding course United States action piaster rate problem in immediate future are as follows:

2. One of principal topics discussion during forthcoming Mayer visit Washington certain to be burden Indochinese war represents for France and ways in which she might be relieved of a greater part that burden than at present, in order enable her play her full role European defense build-up. We recommend that consideration be given to using framework these discussions to obtain insight into current French thinking regarding piaster rate problem. In view of extremely delicate nature this entire subject and importance not giving French excuse to tell Associated States that any eventual change due to United States pressure, United States spokesmen should of course exercise utmost care pose our questions in most matter of fact way possible. We should seek to avoid creating impression United States proposing either rate adjustment in general, or any set of measures in particular (e.g., specific rate change either with or without export and/or remittance taxes). This is especially important during initial stages discussion before we have had chance gauge French reactions. Question might be posed in following terms: "regarding

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[1] The reference telegram, not printed, solicited the views of the Embassies in Paris and Saigon on the question of devaluation of the piaster. (851G.13/2–1953)

magnitude Indochinese burden, United States Government has noted recent allegations in French Parliament and press to the effect that present exchange rate considerably overvalues piaster and that if rate were adjusted to level more nearly commensurate with its actual value, substantial economies would be effected in outlays of French treasury for Indochinese war. Since these allegations, if true, would have important bearing on question under discussion, could French delegation furnish indication point of view French Government on this matter?"

3. In our view, Mayer talks would provide most suitable forum for broaching piaster problem with French since it could be introduced without fanfare into general Indochinese discussion which French themselves will have opened. Such an approach should minimize dangers that French might take exception to our initiative and, for opening gun, would certainly be less risky than series of discussions in Paris and/or Saigon focused exclusively on this topic.

4. Further consideration piaster rate problem and formulation United States policy thereon could then proceed in light of information developed during Mayer talks.

DUNN

751G.00/3-453: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 4, 1953—3 p. m.

1725. Repeated Paris unnumbered, Hanoi unnumbered. I went with General Trapnell to see Marshal Juin who returned yesterday from his Korean trip and three days in Tonkin.[1] I have very much decided impression that Juin is far less interested in an early victorious termination of IC hostilities than he is in build-up of French metropolitan forces. He said it is quite obvious that if Vietnam can with outside (American) help increase its forces by 40,000 men this year and another 40,000 next year that during November 1953–April 1954 campaign season, Franco-Vietnamese forces can possibly deal decisive blows to Viet Minh. He is not sure this will happen. He volunteered that it was impossible for France to withdraw substantially from its IC war. France was committed and had to go through with it but his attitude toward this commitment is expressed by a statement that if he had French officers corps (cadres) now assigned in IC back in France he could readily create 10 additional metropolitan divisions.

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[1] **Marshal Alphonse Juin, Commander of Allied Land Forces in Central Europe and Inspector General of French Armed Forces, visited Indochina from Feb. 15 to 18, and from Mar. 1 to 6 to obtain information on the military situation and the needs of French and Vietnamese forces. During the intervening period, he visited Korea at the invitation of the United States to examine training procedures.**

He paid tribute to magnificent effort of training ROK divisions in Korea. He was impressed by one camp where 70,000 were receiving military training. It was a phenomena like Ford Willow Run plant. He did not see, however, that UN troops could achieve a local victory in Korea with [*without*] much greater strength and facilities than they now have.

In IC important factor is whether or not Vietnamese could recruit or train 40,000 additional troops this year and with them succeed in cleaning out northern delta. If they could relieve the French Union troops now tied down in delta the latter could add to the striking force against major units in Viet Minh. Even more important Viet Minh would not be able to recruit replacements and additions from delta and in that situation could not hope to stand against the French expeditionary force plus the Vietnamese heavy battalions unless China entered as an overt belligerent.

He was somewhat worried (Letourneau expressed same anxiety) lest Chinese should by-pass strongly held Tonkin and attack Thailand and/or Burma. Both countries were a military "zero". In Thailand and in Burma the Commies had used local parties and forces as a spearhead and a mask. In Burma they would have excuse of attacking with Chinese Nationalist troops in north.

HEATH

851G.131/3–853 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 8, 1953—noon.

1747. Repeated Paris 243, information Hanoi unnumbered. Re-Deptel 1719, February 20.[1] Joint Embassy STEM message. Embassy and STEM highly commend MacDiarmid report[2] and concur with his conclusions for necessity of eventual devalution from economic standpoint. Also welcome submission of devaluation problem to NAC.

Department should realize, however, that under present circumstances the three AS firmly believe, and with reason, that there will be no immediate advantage to them in devaluating now and they will strongly resist and resent any pressure to this end. In such an attitude, they will have the at least tacit support of the French authorities here, first because forcing devaluation on the AS would worsen the not too happy relations of France with them, and secondly because the politically powerful French business community, the French bureaucracy, and military are opposed to devaluation because it would reduce the high profits and salaries they now enjoy. As an almost invariable rule, governments cannot be persuaded to devaluate until they are obligated to. For them to devalue now would mean that they would not be able to get their imports at the present artificially cheap rate from France and devaluation would be followed by price rises with consequent discontent among the urban populations at least, because there would be inevitably some increases in living costs. Bartlett, chief STEM, believes price rise potentiality possibly underestimated MacDiarmid report.

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[1] Telegram 1719 to Saigon, concerning the question of devaluation of the piaster, is not printed. (851G.13/2–1953)

[2] See footnote 2, p. 395.

Advantage would be to French Government and French economy as a whole, and to us in that we would be getting great results from our program of military, financial, and economic aid for a lesser expenditure of francs and dollars: I believe MacDiarmid report makes a sound case for thesis that it would be of eventual economic and political benefit to AS themselves if they would take step of devaluation now, instead of awaiting the return of peace and more normal conditions when they will have to devaluate.

What we can do, and should do now, in interests of France and US, is to begin to condition public and official opinion in the AS, and in France, towards advantage of an early devaluation of piaster. It is almost certain that we will be asked to increase our arms aid program in 1954 and will be faced with a request for financial assistance to pay for enlargement of Vietnamese army, which must be increased if we are going to have an early victory over communism in this area. It is dangerous to let war drag on. If it is true that France is already making her maximum contribution here, then we will be called on to foot the additional bill and we will expect to get value received for any additional contribution we make, which we cannot get at present rate of piaster. It is to be noted in this connection that Vietnamese army, originally expected to be a small one, was formed on basis of voluntary enlistment and with pay schedules equal to those of French expeditionary forces. These pay schedules are far in excess of those of other Asiatic armies and beyond capability of AS to finance themselves over any long period without outside help. On other hand, as a practical measure, it is extremely difficult in time of war to cut pay scales to which troops are now accustomed. It might have very disastrous effects on morale and fighting spirit of national armies. Devaluation, however, would cut cost of these pay scales to France and US, which are footing major portion of bill.

It must be repeated, however, that we are in no position, nor is France, to make a direct demand now on AS to consent to devaluation. We can only gradually but determinedly, and particularly if US is to finance piaster cost of Vietnamese army, condition AS Governments to an early devaluation. That process will take several months at least. In addition, we believe French should be persuaded present opportune time encourage AS adopt reasonable exchange tax on financial transfers in order increase own military financing. We can expect powerful French interests object strongly.

STEM and Embassy again urge importance send consultant soonest complement MacDiarmid report by comparable study tax situation.

HEATH

110.11 AC/3–953

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Matthews)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 9, 1953.

Subject: US Objectives and Strategy for Talks with Prime Minister Mayer

Reference is made to Mr. Bonbright's memorandum of March 3d to Mr. Matthews on the above subject.[2]

I fully agree as to the close interconnection between the questions which Mayer will wish to take up on his visit here namely, the French problem in Indochina, France's defense effort in Europe and the relation of US assistance in fiscal years 1953 and 1954 to those two matters. I also have a full understanding of the importance attached by our Government in general to the ratification of EDC by France and the other countries concerned in order that a German contribution to the defense of Europe may begin to take shape by the end of this year.

I note that the reference memorandum recommends that the US be willing to consider immediately and sympathetically any requests for additional assistance related to additional French efforts in Indochina over and above the level of the present effort. I note, however, that any aid to France intended to relieve France of a part of her present Indochina burden would be offered only in the context of an over-all package agreement for the purpose of securing French ratification of the EDC. This package agreement includes, under the terms of the memorandum, $500 million worth of budget-support type of aid to

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] The memorandum, titled "U.S. Objectives and Strategy for Talks with Prime Minister Mayer," was transmitted to Matthews by James C. H. Bonbright, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. Copies were sent to PSA and other interested areas of the Department. For text of the Bonbright memorandum and other documentation on the visit of Mayer to the United States in March 1953, see volume VI.

France in fiscal year 1954. This aid would support both the European and the Indochinese part of the French defense effort.

Therefore, in the event that the French Government is either unwilling or unable to secure prompt ratification of EDC, we would be left in the position of having perhaps agreed to "moderate sums" for possible additional immediate assistance to France in connection with efforts in Indochina over and above the present level while at the same time having taken no decision at all regarding the aid which makes possible the French contribution to the defense of Europe and of Indochina at present levels.

Incidentally, the amount which we plan to offer to France as budget support in FY 1954 is $500 million which compares with $525 million in actual aid in FY 1953 and with a French expectation, about which we will be hearing, of $650 million also for FY 1953. It is noted, however, that the memorandum contemplates that the $500 million figure might be increased by an indeterminate amount if the French can convince us of their further need on the basis of their total effort in Europe and in Indochina.

EUR's proposal places the Indochina egg firmly in the EDC basket. I believe that this should be avoided to the extent possible. I do not of course question the wisdom of the tactics being advocated by EUR in the sense of making a part of our aid to France contingent upon France's ratification of EDC; this is beyond FE's competence. I do urge however, that Indochina be kept as separate as possible from this exercise.

The hot war now being fought in Indochina is at a critical stage. It is my belief that unless effective military plans can be devised and implemented there in the relatively near future, we run the risk of serious adverse developments in both the political and the military fields with a possible threat to our whole position in Southeast Asia. We cannot afford to risk the loss of momentum in Indochina at this point by tying the intensification of the actual military effort there to the problem of a German contribution to the eventual defense of Western Europe—against a possible Soviet aggression—a problem which, as Mr. Bonbright's memorandum points out, has remained pending for two and one-half years since it was first raised as a matter of prime urgency.

Rather it seems to me we should do everything possible to see that the period remaining until the German component of EDC presents an actual rather than a theoretical problem for French military planning on the continent of Europe is employed in the most effective manner possible to defeat and destroy, if at all possible, the Communist aggression in Indochina. It should be clear that, when German soldiers again make their appearance on the Rhine, those French leaders who desire energetically to continue the Indochina war will have a further adverse factor of considerable importance with which to contend.

Nor do I believe we should subject our Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian friends to the discouragement which they would undoubtedly experience if it were made clear to them that our support of the struggle in which their lives and fortunes are engaged is to be deprived of essential free world support pending the adoption by France of a particular defense formula in Western Europe.

I am doubtful as to the possibility of maintaining secrecy if we take the position suggested in Mr. Bonbright's memorandum and suggest that the position in question should be adopted, if at all, with full acceptance of the consequences of publicity.

I am led by the above considerations to suggest a modification of the proposed position which would permit at least an artificial separation of the problem of the active prosecution of the hot war in Indochina from that of an eventual German contribution to the defense structure of Western Europe. My proposal embodies the following features:

1) As set forth in Mr. Bonbright's memorandum we should be willing to consider immediately and sympathetically any requests for additional assistance related to additional French or native efforts in Indochina over and above the level of the present effort.

2) We should be willing to estimate an amount of budget-support aid to France in fiscal year 1954 related to the present level of French expenditures in Indochina. Such an allocation can, of course, be nothing more than an artificial one but for the purposes of this exercise it should be made. A figure of perhaps $300 million is suggested for discussion. In addition, of course, there would be the MDAP and MSA programs specifically earmarked for Indochina.

3) We should indicate a willingness to consider French proposals for the shift to us of a part of the load presently borne by the French in Indochina, regardless of the EDC factor.

4) We should indicate to the French that our assistance to France specifically related to France's contribution to the defense of Western Europe can only be determined after EDC has been ratified, although, on the assumption of such ratification, we are proposing a program of $______ million for budget support plus the related MDAP program. It would presumably be made clear that this aid would only be made available to France upon ratification of the EDC by her Parliament.

751G.5/3–1253: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, March 12, 1953—8 p. m.

1779. Repeated information Paris, Hanoi unnumbered.

1. Prior to Letourneau's visit last June Embassy suggested for discussion with him fairly long list (Embassy's 2218, May 10 and 2224,

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[1] **This telegram was transmitted in three parts.**

May 11 [*12*]) of political concessions which we thought French should make in order to permit creation of Vietnamese Government of national union willing and able to govern and successfully prosecute war. We also suggested a list of social and economic reforms which should be undertaken by Bao Dai and Vietnamese Government with joint French and American help, urging and guidance. Since then measure of progress has been made along lines suggested (Embassy's 1469, January 25 and 1534, February 4) and recommendations still constitute desirable program of objectives.

In forthcoming Mayer–Bidault–Letourneau conversations, however, I believe there are no major political decisions or concessions which at this time we should press the French to make. I do not believe, for example, that it would be politically practical, in view of present disposition of French Parliament, for French to go further in way of "evolutionary statement" than that Letourneau made before the Overseas Writers Club last June, which unfortunately was never published locally. We are told that an informal agreement has at last been reached between Letourneau and Tam to turn over the Norodom Palace when Vietnamese have constructed a residence with office quarters for French High Commissariat to Vietnam (see eyes only telegram 1700, February 28).[2] Letourneau's plan for reorganizing French representation in direction of separate diplomatic missions to the Associated States plus group of attached economic and cultural missions has not yet been put into effect but is expected to be implemented shortly. French are expecting obtain small credit for direct economic aid to Indochina which we assume will eventually be increased and will tend to give French Union affiliation a more positive value in Vietnamese eyes than has its present somewhat tutelary character.

We had understood the French were about to abolish stipulation in March 8 accords whereby Vietnamese legislation would not be binding on French nationals unless also promulgated by the High Commissariat, but Letourneau now holds it would be presently unwise voluntarily to offer any single concession from the accords and would be preferable to await return of peace when inevitably whole structure of Franco-Vietnamese and Franco-Cambodian relationships and privileges will have to be renegotiated. I do not believe that at this precise time we can or should urge French to whittle away accords by unilateral piecemeal concessions, in view of French attitude that, since they are bearing lion's share of fighting and expense of protecting Vietnamese independence, it is quite legitimate for them to enjoy privileged status. I believe that stipulation in the accords whereby French nationals can be judged only by mixed French-Vietnamese tribunals is not compatible with Vietnamese independence but for the moment, in view of civil war, terrorism and the newness of the Vietnamese judiciary, the Vietnamese courts are not yet competent to dispense sure justice. Surprisingly enough this has not been one of the main items in Vietnamese bill of complaints. While we believe that economic privileges accorded French interests in March 8 accords are excessive and in France's own interest should be reduced, I think we can leave to Vietnamese Government responsibility for defending Vietnamese interests when time has come for renegotiation of these accords. As regards Vietnamese army, the French in the recent meeting of joint high military committee permitted and in fact encouraged an increase in numbers and autonomous responsibilities of national army. At the talks I think we should compliment Letourneau on this development.

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[2] Not printed.

While I believe that at this time there are no political concessions which we should urge the French to make to the Vietnamese, we should insist, if we are going to be asked to foot a deficit resulting from proposed expansion of Vietnamese national army, that French moderate their hitherto quite adamant stand against any Vietnamese tax increases which would bear heavily on French interests here. This is discussed in part 3 of this telegram.

2. As regards national reforms and improved performance on the part of Vietnamese Government, we should suggest in these talks that French join with us in urging on Bao Dai and Viet Government a more active program of agrarian reform. Because of French and Vietnamese vested interests, French have given no support to our urging of this reform on Bao Dai and Tam Government. We might well also discuss with French possibility of persuading Bao Dai to allow the formation of national assembly.

The French favor an indirectly elected national assembly, but it is questionable whether this will satisfy popular demand for direct participation in political life of nation whetted by January 25 village and municipal elections. Bao Dai not unnaturally opposes a national assembly since it would infringe on his present theoretically absolute power and it might press for a republic instead of a monarchy. We feel that out of a truly representative national forum some elements of political dynamism and popular appeal which this situation requires should surely emerge.

3. The important Indochina problem up for discussion in the forthcoming talks is the planned expansion of Vietnamese national army which we will undoubtedly be asked, in large part, both to equip and to finance. If it is true that France is already making her maximum financial and military contribution to Indochina and that Vietnamese Government revenues cannot be increased to cover calendar year 1954 deficit resulting from recruiting 40,000 troops this year and an additional 40,000 or more next year, the US, to preserve Southeast Asia

from Communism, should come to the rescue financially. But we should insist that (as proposed in MacDiarmid report) the French withdraw their certain objection, one might almost say veto, to the imposition of an exchange tax on financial remittances abroad. This would allow Vietnamese Government to increase its financial contribution. Remittances of French soldiers and functionaries could be exempted from this tax. We should be prepared, if the French are too resolute in their objections, not to insist upon an absolute exchange tax but to demand that at least 20 per cent of financial remittances be invested in short or medium term Vietnamese war bonds the principal of which on their due date could be transferred abroad by the holders. If the French resist an exchange tax, they should be persuaded to accept some other form of taxation which will reduce war induced profits to the benefit of military budget.

We should also tell the French, when they remind us of the heavy financial burden they are bearing in Indochina and when they request us to increase our financial contribution to the Indochina war, that a quite substantial part of the cost is due to the unrealistic exchange rate of the piastre agreed to by the French some years ago. We realize, of course, that France cannot unilaterally alter the franc–piastre rate and that pressure to force the 3 Associated States to agree to devaluation would now meet with obstinate resistance from the latter (see my 1747, March 8).

We should, however, endeavor to persuade the French that in the interest of France and our own finances and, we believe, in the eventual interest of the Associated States themselves, they should join with us in "conditioning" the Associated States Governments—and the French business and official community here—to early devaluation of the piastre.

If we are called upon to increase our contribution to the French and Vietnamese effort here, we are entitled in these talks to receive a plan of offensive operations calculated to break the VM resistance in so many months or so many years. There is I feel sure no such plan at present. Furthermore, we need assurance that this offensive plan will in fact be aggressively carried out. Too many French minds are imbued with the idea that complete eradication of VM would be dangerous because Chinese Communists would then invade Indochina. I suggest that no war can be successfully prosecuted nor can any increase in our present contribution be justified if such a mental reservation is held. I think we might ask for and I believe French will be ready to give us assurance that they have no intention of negotiating a compromise with the VM—this to dispel recurring rumors.

We should have assurance that French will send their best commanders to this region. While we recognize Salan as a competent general, we believe that he has been over-prudent. His tour here will shortly end. From long observation we believe General De Linares, now commanding in the North, would be a successful Commander-in-Chief, and General Cogny, now under Linares, who is remarkably popular with both his French and Vietnamese troops and civilians, would be a fine commander in the North. Both were selected by the late Marshal de Lattre. There may be French generals equal or superior to them, but we do not know them. Obviously we cannot specifically request that certain French generals be assigned, but certainly we do not wish to see a commander such as General Carpentier,[3] who was calamitously inadequate in 1950 to this peculiar military situation.

Finally, while the French military and High Commissariat have been cooperating in giving us quite full military and political information, we have been able only with difficulty to obtain general information about the amount passing through exchange control, which is still in French hands. If we are to expand our financial contribution in an area which is of primary interest to the French, without any direct benefits for ourselves, we should at least have a banker's right to full access to detailed international financial transactions of the area.

I have not mentioned in this cable one question which French will most probably raise—namely, what is US prepared to do in case Chinese invade?

The foregoing has been shown to General Trapnell, MAAG Chief and has his concurrence. Bartlett also concurs but would like also to include in the agenda discussion of desirability formulating a medium term, overall economic plan.

HEATH

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[3] Gen. Marcel Carpentier, Commander of French Union Forces in Indochina, 1949–1950.

751G.00/3–1253 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 12, 1953—5 p. m.

1789. Repeated information Paris unnumbered, Hanoi unnumbered. In general discussion of problems and prospects in coming weeks, Cheysson informed Embassy officer that President Tam feels confident that slow but steady progress has recently been made, particularly in south Vietnam, with respect to elections, pacification, development of National Army and general psychological climate. He believes this has been borne out by display of popular enthusiasm on occasion of March 8 national holiday celebrations, which were highlighted not only by impressive aerial and military parade but also by spectacle of Tam mingling with crowd in streets at a ceremony marking beginning of demolition of central prison of Saigon, described by entire vernacular press as Vietnamese bastille and hated vestige of vanished regime. Tam's Independence Day speech included deliberately worded and highly flattering references to Bao Dai as "father of Vietnamese independence", which produced prompt expression of imperial gratitude, thus bearing out Cheysson's impression that, at least momentarily, favoring wind is blowing from Banmethout in Tam's direction. He thinks that Tam has approximately seven or eight month period of grace before Bao Dai may decide that pacification of south Vietnam will have been practically accomplished and autonomy of National Army sufficiently crystallized to enable him to take over direct charge of government. Meanwhile he added it is to be anticipated that imperial entourage will lose no useful opportunity to throw sand in works.

With reference to projected reform of French representation in Indochina, which might in principle buttress Tam's position by taking additional wind out of extreme nationalists' sails, Cheysson commented bitterly on what he described as systematic "dragging of feet" of influential circles around Letourneau. When asked to amplify this, he did not specifically attack Minister Resident, whose position as one of senior MRP politicians he believes must inevitably involve a certain amount of jockeying for position within French Government as well as in Parliamentary and electoral competition. He was, however, scathing in his condemnation of (1) surviving elements of old colonial administration, with their Bourbon approach to the complex psychological problem of winning confidence and cooperation of Vietnamese, and (2) French business community in Indochina, which he feels will never hesitate to turn a dishonest piaster into an even more dishonest franc and while engaged in these lucrative pursuits, will continue to operate with serene disregard for major permanent interests of France, as well as those of her soldiers and taxpayers.

In this connection, Cheysson referred sarcastically to rumored appointment of Gautier as first High Commissioner to Vietnam as only latest in series of "half measures" which had dogged implementation of French policy in Indochina since 1945 and often cost France some or all of benefits which might have been harvested from initiatives in themselves both practical and praiseworthy. He contrasted this with forthcoming departure of Janot, Letourneau's Cabinet director, who has completed two years assignment here and is shortly returning to Paris to resume his duties with Conseil d'Etat. Cheysson believes that Janot's willingness to work with Vietnamese towards acceptable solution of their relationship with France within framework of March 8 accords has earned him lasting enmity of groups referred to above, who in his opinion will not hesitate ruthlessly to use their undoubted political power to eliminate those whom they consider insufficiently supple in their response to pressure. He thinks they have neither learned anything nor forgotten anything and therefore that they and their attitude are more to blame than any other single factor for doubts and qualms still felt by many Vietnamese in coming out openly and wholeheartedly in favor of National Government. He does not expect Letourneau, who as a politician is obliged to deal with and is subject to myriad pressures surrounding both Palais Bourbon and Palais Norodom, to put a stop to this state of affairs, but he is convinced that absence of decisive directive in this whole field will in long run gravely compromise France's future relationships with Associated States and undermine principal pillars of much discussed *présence Française* in Indochina.

Comment: Cheysson's surprisingly frank comments, although perhaps partly to be attributed to passing burst of pessimism, are noteworthy as coming from official in position to know what goes on behind French governmental scene, both here and in Paris. His views are representative of those occasionally encountered among younger French civil officials responsible for working-level implementation of Franco-Vietnamese relations.

HEATH

Editorial Note

On March 13, 1953, the Joint Chiefs of Staff transmitted a memorandum titled "Broadening the Participation of the United States in the Indochina Operation" to Charles E. Wilson, the Secretary of Defense. The memorandum recommended against involvement by the United States in combat operations, but urged that a number of measures be suggested to the French with a view toward increasing the effectiveness of the forces of the French Union and the Associated States of Indochina. For text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pages 11–14.

751G.5/3–1553 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 15, 1953—7 p. m.

1796. Rptd info Paris unnumbered, Hanoi unnumbered. I called on President Tam March 13. Discussing the Mayer–Bidault–Letourneau visit to Washington Tam said the great problem of Vietnam was to find financial means further to increase Vietnamese National Army in 1954. The recruiting of 54 battalions in 1953 had already started. He had just signed an order to recruit an initial 10,000 men. I remarked that the additional cost in 1954 of these battalions would be something slightly over one billion piastres ($50 million). He stated that General Alessandri's plans for 1954 called for recruiting 98 battalions more. They could be financed he asserted only by outside help. He had increased Vietnamese contribution to the military budget from one billion piastres to 1.7 billion piastres in 1952 and this year Vietnam would contribute 2.9 billion piastres.

I challenged his statement that this was the maximum that Vietnam could contribute saying that, if French and other interests would not oppose such action, increased or new taxes, such as a tax on financial transfers abroad, could be levied. He laughingly agreed to this saying that for more than a year he had thought about imposing a transfer tax but there would be firm opposition not only from French interests but from Bao Dai himself.

2. He objected to my observation that his agrarian reform program seemed to have stalled. It was true that only 30,000 hectares of large holdings had actually been sold to the tenants. But more and more big landlords were approaching him trying to sell their holdings to the state. He had told them to sell direct to the tenants and that the government would assist the tenants financially in making initial payments. The government had no funds to buy properties outright. He thought that many of the landlords would eventually make sale arrangements with their tenants. He could move only slowly toward agrarian reform because there were too many forces in opposition. Progress was, however, being made. For example in Bentre Province a cooperative had been formed which had negotiated agreements with the landlords reducing annual rentals to from 15 to 25 percent of the rice crop from the 40 or fifty percent previously charged.

3. He insisted that he was going ahead with his plans to form a National Assembly. The opposition of Bao Dai could be overcome. In his own interest and that of the monarchy Bao Dai could not delay too long in yielding to popular demand for a National Assembly, the more so since Bao Dai two years ago in his Tet message had promised the assembly. Only a national legislature could legalize the monarchy. As an initial step, he, Tam, still favored an indirectly elected assembly, the recently elected communal councils choosing representatives to provincial assemblies which in turn would name representatives to the national body. However it was possible that public opinion would insist on a directly elected national legislature. He was going to go to the north the end of the month and travel through the country and test public opinion on this and other subjects.

4. One of the purposes of his trip to the north was to take a look at the pilot operation of Governor Tri's super-village project. He would not be convinced that the peasants were actually in favor of moving out of their hamlets into the new village until he had actually talked with them. Also there was the problem that the super-village project would be enormously expensive and the government simply did not have the funds. I told him that I had inspected the pilot village and I thought that from the standpoint of pacification of the delta the construction of a number of "strong villages" was imperatively desirable.

HEATH

751G.00/3–1653 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, March 16, 1953—9 a. m.

1797. Repeated information Hanoi, Paris unnumbered. I went to Ban Me Thuot yesterday to take leave of Bao Dai and to present new Counselor, Robert McClintock.

1. Bao Dai discussed expansion of Vietnamese Army. Financing of 54 commando battalions for 1953 was assured by French help and anticipated increase in Vietnamese general revenues which would allow expansion of Vietnamese contribution to defense budget from 1.7 billion piastres for 1952 to 2.9 billion piastres this calendar year. For 1954 he recommended an increase as Alessandri had advised of 98 battalions. Cost of this increase which could not be borne by Vietnam would have to come from French possibly with American aid, but Bao Dai said that French should be able manage this alone since extra cost should not exceed 30 to 40 billion francs (roughly $85 to $117 million).

He indicated that Vietnamese could not again increase its contribution in 1954. I suggested to him as I had to President Tam (see Embtel 1796, March 15) that Vietnam could increase taxes or impose new ones although this would probably involve opposition from French and Vietnamese interests. I suggested specifically that temporary tax on financial transfers abroad could be levied. The idea of this tax was evidently not very interesting or pleasing to Bao Dai. (His transfers abroad are large and regular.) He did not discuss this suggestion. Instead, he said that with expansion of Vietnamese Army they should in fairly short time clean Viet-Minh out of South Vietnam, which would permit resumption of large rice exports with consequent increased revenues to government.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

2. Bao Dai brought up his desire to send special mission headed by General Hinh to States, probably in late April, and inquired whether I would be in Washington at that time. I repeated (see Embtel 1721, March 4)[2] that Washington was agreeable to General Hinh's visit but pointed out that it would be with Pentagon, although we would, of course, be glad to see and talk with him in Department. Bao Dai made no mention of possibility President Tam visiting Washington at same time, although according to Cheysson, Tam had informed Bao Dai of his desire to make trip.

3. In an over-all survey of military position Bao Dai said that enemy still had the initiative. He referred to recent fighting in or near Hue during which the Vietnamese forces had lost 30 killed and 150 missing as illustrative of recent raids from Communist territory in north into Vietnamese-held areas. He thought one strategic objective of Viet-Minh command was to penetrate to Mekong River.

4. When I inquired as to his notions as to who might replace General Salan, Bao Dai said that he had no idea. He felt, however, that French high command in Vietnam usually had been selected more with view to satisfy requirements of French domestic politics than for their special qualifications in field. He said that most French generals sent out here seemed to regard the assignment as means to winning more ribbons preparatory to their return to metropolis. He personally did not know the top echelon of the French Army, but could only hope that if Salan were replaced his successor would not be man of same stripe of Carpentier. He remarked that General Alessandri would be the ideal man to exercise high command but supposed there were no possibilities of his getting it because of his lack of political backing in France.

Comment: I personally agree Alessandri would be highly competent commander-in-chief. He certainly achieved success in 1949, and military disasters in fall of 1950, which began during his absence in France where he had gone on leave because of his disagreement with the French military plans and Carpentier's High Command, were not his fault. I also agree that there is no practical chance of Alessandri getting command since he was made scapegoat for defects of French military plans and Carpentier's command.

5. On political situation Bao Dai said that he expected difficulties in north. He seemed to anticipate that recently-elected municipal

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[2] Telegram 1721 from Saigon, Mar. 4, concerning possible trips abroad by Vietnamese leaders, is not printed. (751G.11/3–453)

councillors would resign in protest to the intent of administration to govern without their advice. He likewise thought there was very imminent threat of student strike in Tonkin.

However, Emperor as usual was philosophic and said that "when I arrived here in 1945, I started with nothing. Things are somewhat better but we need much patience. It takes time". I inquired what he proposed to do to avert these resignations of councillors in north and he replied that this was not his problem but Tam's. Tam was responsible for this development by his insistence on going ahead with elections.

6. Bao Dai said that his health was better but that he was rather looking forward to short trip to France in May and on two occasions during our talk asked me to visit him in Cannes on my way back to Saigon.[3] He said that his trips to France were generally useful since they gave him chance to talk with French political personalities. Thus he said that in 1950 [*1949*] while the accords were being negotiated, he had argued, he thought with success, with several RPF deputies not to overthrow the Queuille [4] government at that time.

Following my audience with Emperor, I had lengthy talk with Nguyen De. He confirmed Bao Dai's estimate (or possibly it was he who had furnished Bao Dai with the information) of impending difficulties in Tonkin and said that at all costs the forthcoming student strike and the threatening resignation of the municipal councillors should be quashed. As for the ability of the Prime Minister, Tam, to counter this political trouble in north, Minister expressed considerable doubt, although he said he had always upheld Tam in his conversations with Bao Dai. He said that Tam was man of authority and action, but his posture was brittle because of his too great confidence in and reliance on the French.

He then launched long criticism of Tam of seeking political popularity by premature idea of local elections and National Assembly. He was merely playing game of ambitious politicians who think only of their own interests and not of danger to country of Communist China. To hold elections or form National Assembly at this time would be merely to play into Viet Minh hands. Nevertheless, he said for time being there is nobody in sight to lead government except Tam.

HEATH

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[3] On Mar. 17, Ambassador Heath departed from Saigon for Washington for consultation and leave, and in order to participate in the U.S.-French conversations which occurred during the visit of Premier Mayer to the United States, Mar. 26–28. Heath did not return to his post until June.

[4] Henri Queuille was Premier of France from September 1948 to October 1949.

FE files, lot 58 D 258, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Officer in Charge of Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs (Hoey) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 16, 1953.

Subject: Visit of Working Group to Paris March 8–13[2]

The Working Group which visited Paris from March 8–13 has now returned and we have documentation of the replies submitted by the French to the lists of economic and military questions which were previously submitted to the French for their replies.

The documents are now being translated and will be reproduced for our use in discussing Indochinese problems with the French Ministerial Mission later this month.

There were no political questions as such put forward by the Working Group since it was recognized that matters of broad policy would have to be reserved for talks at the Ministerial level. However, the information developed will be of considerable interest to us not only in preparing for the Ministerial Talks, but to indicate the general French line of reasoning with respect to Indochina. The major pertinent points are summarized below:

1) The augmentation of the Viet-Nam National Army by 40,000 additional troops during the balance of calendar 1953 has already begun with the call-up of 10,000 men during March. Subsequent increments will develop the total number by the Fall of 1953. The cost of pay, maintenance and training of these troops will be jointly borne by the French and Vietnamese Governments with no anticipated French request for U.S. funds for this purpose. A request has been made to Defense through MAAG, Saigon, for U.S. carbines, machine guns and ammunition for the new units, but supply action has not yet begun. In the interim, the French Union Army in Indochina is ad-

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[1] Transmitted through Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] The Chief of the U.S. Delegation in the working group discussions was Philip D. Sprouse, First Secretary of the Embassy in Paris. The French Delegation was headed by Robert Tézenas du Montcel, Director General of the French Ministry for the Associated States. U.S. participants from Washington included Hoey; Edgar J. Beigel, French Affairs Officer, Department of State; Cmdr. Wade Wells, USN, of the Office of Military Assistance, Department of Defense; Lt. Col. Robert Storey, of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations, U.S. Army; Col. Robert Fergusson, of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense; John B. Nason, Indochina Officer, MSA; and John Coppock, French Affairs Officer, MSA.

The working group discussions centered on questionnaires submitted by the U.S. representatives. In addition to daily plenary meetings, subcommittee sessions on economic, military, and budgetary matters were conducted. Questionnaires, minutes, and other documentation of the U.S.-French working group proceedings are in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 138.

vancing to the Vietnamese Army Program the necessary arms and equipment to set up the training camps and to initially equip the units produced therefrom. Upon the arrival of U.S. equipment the loaned equipment will be returned to the French Union stores.

2) The 40,000 additional troops planned are in addition to the regular program of eight Divisions for the National Army of Viet-Nam. This regular program has by now developed five "divisions" (actually with only one Division Headquarters), with the sixth scheduled to be activated by the end of 1953. By mid-1954 the balance of the eight are expected to be activated, less certain administrative and supply functions.

3) Although never stated definitely, it was certainly put forward by implication that the United States will be requested to supply funds for the pay and maintenance of any future augmentation of a similar type during calendar 1954. Tentative Franco–Vietnamese plans for calendar 1954 now call for an additional 40,000 increase over the regular program, but this figure may be raised depending upon the success of the 1953 Program as well as upon the U.S. reaction to a request for monetary assistance. In addition, the United States would be called upon to supply matériel equipment for such a future force.

4) The Franco–Vietnamese military authorities have drawn up a definite plan to substantially increase during 1953 officer and NCO cadres for the additional army units.

5) The French Union Army has a plan, which will be explained during the Ministerial Talks, of gradual turnover to the Vietnamese Army of authority in portions of South, Central and North Viet-Nam now administered by the French Union Forces.

6) There may be additional requests made on the United States during the balance of calendar 1953 for transport aircraft over and above that now requested.

7) On the economic side, the French gave the Working Group considerable useful information and data concerning the French military budget as well as general economic information which had not previously been available. Paris telegram No. 5068 attached summarizes economic points brought up.[3]

Conclusion

The data developed by the Working Group will be most useful to us in preparation for the Ministerial Talks. The French Working Level Delegation was very frank and answered the great majority of questions put to them both verbally and in writing in a complete and accurate manner.

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[3] Telegram 5068 from Paris, Mar. 13, not printed, summarized points raised during the proceedings of the economic subcommittee of the working group. The message concluded as follows: "Allusions were made informally by members of French delegation that interest of French Government, as widely reported in press, is to 'share' larger part of overall Indochina burden with United States, in context of global French military effort. No precise ideas of what French Government may have in mind were imparted to economic working group." (751G.5/3–1353)

751J.5/3–1953 : Telegram

The Chargé at Vientiane (Thomson) to the Department of State

SECRET VIENTIANE, March 19, 1953—4 p. m.

17. Repeated information Saigon 155, Paris unn. Ambassador Heath called on Crown Prince Savang at Luang Prabang March 16 accompanied by McClintock and myself.

In course conversation regarding problems Lao national defense, Ambassador suggested that Lao Government, to ensure full consideration its point of view during Letourneau visit Washington and subsequent studies, submit statement its projects for strengthening national forces including some detail regarding needs external aid. After reflection, Savang said he would descend Vientiane March 18 and that statement might be produced within week.

Comment: Despite Savang's reply, and although I informed both Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of foregoing conversation same evening in Vientiane, I doubt whether Lao Government can quickly produce any statement detailed enough to be of great use. Total lack qualified military planners leaves Lao Government hardly capable drawing up military projects other than those developed by French; and this degree dependence would render Laos cautious about submitting anything this nature to US without prior French clearance. To my knowledge no projects yet considered for Laos parallel recent Dalat decisions for Vietnam. Effort continuing along established lines gradually improving and enlarging existing National Army (now about 12,000 men) and lightly-armed National Guard (about 6,000 men). Savang might use above statement to plug his pet project convert most of existing Lao infantry into paratroops. Legation will of course follow matter and assure speediest transmittal any results to Department.

Other points of interest conversation with Savang:

(1) National defense: Savang much concerned over Chinese intentions, but did not even mention Vietminh threat from Thai country North Vietnam. While not prepared deny that fate of Laos linked to outcome struggle in Vietnam, he continued reflect Lao Government's hope steer clear any unnecessary involvement in what they call "Vietnamese civil war" (re Saigon tel 1061 November 22), and specifically to avoid use Lao troops outside borders of Laos. He conceded nevertheless that such refusal based "present conditions" of conflict, and that Lao troops might fight beyond frontiers if conflict should become "more generalized". He was vague about changes in conditions he had in mind.

(2) French conception of Indochina war effort: Savang expressed mild irritation at changeability Letourneau's declarations, varying from emphasis struggle as common problem free world to most recent shift toward playing up French Union interests. Added, however,

realization that Letourneau less than free agent, subjected many different pressures.

(3) Reorganization of French administration in Indochina: Stated that, like rest of Laotians, he would be impressed only by results, not by promises or assignment new titles to same old faces.

(4) Minister to Washington: Savang said that while Lao Government ready establish mission immediately, he did not consider Minister designate fully prepared yet. (Foreign Minister now anticipates Ourot's arrival Washington perhaps month of May.)[1]

(5) Personal plans: Savang to travel to France early May, thence to Coronation London. King whose gout still bad may try cure in France during summer.

THOMSON

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[1] Ourot Souvannavong presented his credentials on July 13, 1953.

751G.5/3–1953: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, March 19, 1953—5:13 p. m.

4907. Recent Paris working-level discussions added substantially to our factual background on Indochina. Please express to Foreign Minister my appreciation for cooperation all concerned. Also take early opportunity discuss informally on my behalf with Mayer or Bidault forthcoming conversations along following general lines:

"Secretary Acheson in December 1952 and I last month have discussed with our French colleagues the Indochina situation. On both these occasions we received indications French Government was planning to request US Govt to increase already considerable share of financial burden of the struggle which it is now bearing. I assume that when Mayer, Bidault and Letourneau come to Washington they will furnish further particulars regarding French Government's plans and resulting requirements. It may be helpful to them in formulating their position to express to them informally some of considerations involved not only in matter of additional aid but also in continuation American assistance at present substantial level. Considerations are:

First, Government and people of US are fully aware of importance to free world of war being waged in Indochina by armies of France and Associated States. They appreciate sacrifices which have been and are being made and degree to which Communist plans have been thwarted by magnificent defense carried out in Indochina against Communist aggression.

Second, we envisage Indochina situation with real sense of urgency. We believe continued military stalemate will produce most undesirable political consequences in Indochina, France and U.S. Therefore, we heartily agree that considerable increased effort having as its aim liquidation of principal regular enemy forces within period of say, twenty-four months is essential. We obviously do not wish share Franco-Vietnamese responsibility for conduct operations. However, if interested Departments this Government are to urge Congress to make necessary appropriations for Indochina for FY 54, those Departments must be convinced that necessarily top secret strategic plans for Indochina are sound and can be and will be aggressively and energetically prosecuted.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Repeated to Saigon for information as telegram 1861.

Third, I share concern frequently expressed in French circles regarding adequacy of the financial contribution to prosecution of war derived from residents of the Associated States including French businessmen. While I welcome increased Vietnamese Government contribution recently made, I believe there is ground for thoroughgoing re-examination this problem into which balance of payment and rate of exchange considerations enter and which of course is of interest to us in its bearing upon the need for US aid.

Fourth, I look forward to opportunity talking with my French colleagues on question of free world policy in Far East as whole and particularly the policies which we should adopt in order to discourage further Chinese Communist aggression. I hope to reach agreement that speedy defeat of Viet Minh forces in Indochina would deter rather than provoke Chinese Communist aggression in Tonkin since it would be a clear indication of our joint determination to meet force with effective force.

Fifth, I should appreciate receiving any views which my French friends may care to convey regarding relations between the US and the Associated States of Indochina and particularly regarding participation by latter in discussions of military and economic policy and in reception of US aid."

Please handle on strictly oral basis and let me have reaction. The specified points are designed to be exploratory; I would welcome any ideas French may wish to convey on these or other topics prior to our conversations.

DULLES

751G.5/3-2053: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, March 20, 1953—4 p. m.

1830. Last night General Salan gave briefing to General Clark [1] on present military situation Vietnam.

French Commander-in-Chief said that he expected that areas of infiltration in Cochin-China and South Central Vietnam almost as far as Hue would be cleaned up by end 1953. However, he was not optimistic regarding prospects of removing Viet Minh Forces in North Central Vietnam, delta, or Northern Laos.

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[1] Gen. Mark W. Clark, USA, Commander in Chief, Far East, and Commander in Chief, UN Command in Korea, visited Indochina from March 19 to 23.

Salan told General Clark that, when offensive commenced October 10 against Nasan, Viet Minh showed surprising capability of mounting three regular divisions plus one heavy division for that attack. French could only oppose eight battalions to counter this superior force and it was only by strategic withdrawal, effective air force aid, and sudden decision of Viet Minh High Command to withdraw across Red River that offensive failed.

Salan stated that same Viet Minh capability still exists and that he anticipates foe's four divisions will presently launch a strategic offensive against Northern Laos. He said French and Vietnamese Forces in this area and in delta were probably sufficient successfully to maintain holding positions.

McClintock

751G.5/3–2153 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon)[1] *to the Department of State*

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, March 21, 1953—8 p. m.

5179. Repeated information Saigon 204. For Secretary from Dillon. I saw Bidault this afternoon and passed on to him thoughts in Deptel 4907.[2] He listened with interest and then asked me to tell you that he was glad the United States recognized the importance of the war in Indochina to the whole free world. He further said that he was in general agreement with the second, third and fourth considerations as outlined in reference telegram, with one exception. This was inclusion of French businessmen among those residents of Indochina who were not contributing enough to the war effort. He admitted that there was considerable war profiteering going on locally in Indochina, but said that the French residents had only a small hand in this compared to local Chinese residents and Vietnamese, including Vietnamese officials. Despite his statement of general agreement with third consideration your message, I personally do not feel he paid much attention to the suggested possibility of a change in the rate of exchange. I consider his general agreement to mean only that he recognizes that it is now an appropriate time for a re-examination of the whole situation with no commitment as to the French position during such a re-examination.

Regarding your fifth consideration, he had no particular pertinent thoughts. He talked at length about the great difficulty in dealing with the Associated States because their competent leaders were very few in number and had had to be created by the French. The development of local leaders was a slow process and, meanwhile, there would be difficulties similar to those encountered in dealing with the Arab States. He also quoted Juin as saying that it was harder to train Vietnamese as soldiers than it was to train South Koreans as the Japanese had given a military tradition to Korea while there never had been such a tradition in Indochina. Nevertheless, he said Juin felt that the training was progressing satisfactorily.

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[1] C. Douglas Dillon succeeded James Clement Dunn as Ambassador to France on Mar. 13, 1953.

[2] Dated Mar. 19, p. 416.

[Here follows discussion of the proposed European Defense Community.]

DILLON

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Meetings with the President"

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 24, 1953.

Participants: President
Secretary Dulles
Secretary Humphrey[2]
Secretary Wilson[3]
Mr. Stassen[4]

(Secretary called in Messrs Merchant and MacArthur and gave to them orally substance of this memorandum. No distribution at all. Copies to be kept in our immediate office.)

There was discussion concerning the attitude to take toward Mayer and Bidault. Mr. Dulles pointed out that Mayer was a real friend and, broadly speaking, espoused the same ideas as we had regarding the EDC and Indochina. We should treat him as in our corner. The problem was to work out together the ways and means of effectuating our common purpose. If we could not do that with Mayer, it was doubtful it could be done at all in the predictable future and grave consequences would result.

. . . .

There was discussion of the Indochina situation and recognition that it had probably the top priority in foreign policy, being in some ways more important than Korea because the consequences of loss there could not be localized, but would spread throughout Asia and Europe.

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[1] The source text indicates that this conversation occurred at a breakfast meeting at the White House.

[2] George M. Humphrey, the Secretary of the Treasury.

[3] Charles Erwin Wilson, Secretary of Defense.

[4] Harold E. Stassen, Director of Mutual Security.

It was agreed that we would probably have to step up considerably our aid to the French in Indochina if there was a plan that promised real success.

There was further discussion as to deterrence against the Chinese Communists so they would not send their forces openly into Vietnam as they had done in Korea after the North Koreans were defeated.

. . . .

751G.11/3–2453 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 24, 1953—4 p. m.

1840. Dept pass Defense, Pusan. Rptd info Tokyo 53, Paris 259, Pusan 6. Following his interview March 20 with Bao Dai, General Clark said that despite views expressed by Letourneau (Embtel 1721, March 4, Deptel 1812, March 10, Pusan telegram 1106 to Department March 4),[1] he thought considerable benefit might be derived from a visit by Bao Dai to Korea. As Clark put it, "We might be able to shame him into being useful." General added that, if it should be decided to extend Bao Dai an invitation, this should properly come from President Rhee.[2]

At termination his highly successful four day tour of Indochina, in which he made an outstandingly good impression, General Clark announced to press that he had invited Generals Salan and Linares as well as Vietnamese Chief of Staff General Hinh, to visit him in Tokyo and to inspect situation in Korea. He will likewise accelerate visit here of training team mission as follow-up to recent Franco–Vietnamese training team visit to Korea.

McCLINTOCK

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[1] None printed.

[2] Syngman Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea.

751G.5/3–2453 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, March 24, 1953—5 p. m.

5202. Repeated information Saigon 205. Ministry Associated States today handed us copy report[1] on recent Franco-Vietnamese Mission to Korea for inspection US training methods. Tezenas du Montcel, Director General Ministry Associated States, taking report to Washington for use during Mayer–Bidault talks.

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[1] Not identified in Department of State files.

Report reviews findings of mission and says study basic principles instruction methods and general conditions necessary for their success indicate impossible use "Korean solution" beneficially in Vietnam. Report makes points: Front does not exist, enemy everywhere, war has special character different from classic form combat and base unit is battalion and not division as in Korea. Report says impossible France and Vietnam meet great expense of "troop factory" of American type, difficulties of communication prevent centralization instruction as in Korea, and Vietnamese and French temperaments do not lend themselves to these instruction methods which tend to extreme specialization, automatism and absolute subordination to instructors.

Report concludes however that without abandoning concepts appropriate to French army inherited by Vietnamese forces, adaptation of American methods to IC might bring about increased output, unity of doctrine and more rapid formation of units. Text being forwarded by air pouch.

DILLON

751G.5/3–2453 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, March 24, 1953—5 p. m.

1841. Repeated information Paris 260. Department pass Defense. Embassy telegram 1830 March 20. Following are high points of briefing given General Clark at Nam Dinh in Tonkin Delta by General De Linares and Colonel Nemo, Commander Franco-Vietnamese forces Southern sector delta:[1]

1. Viet Minh in North has 5 divisions including 1 heavy division and 2 detached regiments on periphery around delta. Heavy division and 2 others lie immediately to North of French perimeter, while 2 other divisions, the 304th and 320th, lie West and South. Two detached regiments are on Yunnan border NNE of delta. Recent information indicates that positions of all 5 divisions are being shifted and that important advance dumps have been established in vicinity of Moc Chau. Meanwhile, Viet Minh has 3 regular regiments inside delta. Total Viet Minh forces comprise 88 battalions of regulars, plus 20 battalions of guerrilla formations.

2. Franco-Vietnamese forces in same area total 85 battalions, but 60 battalions are immobilized in delta and in Nasan enclave. General De Linares said he had only 25 battalions available for maneuver made up of 8 paratroop battalions and 17 regular. He contrasted this

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[1] Further information on this briefing was transmitted to Washington by the Embassy in despatch 409, Mar. 26. (751G.5/3–2653)

meager corps of maneuver against enemy capacity of 45 battalions maneuver.

3. General De Linares said there were three hypotheses as to enemy intentions in forthcoming campaign season:

(*a*) An enveloping movement in North utilizing recently established new lines of communications from Yunnan which would strike at Northernmost French airfield at Lai Chau. This would place Viet Minh forces in contact with Thai elements. However, in light of recent shifting of Viet Minh divisions and establishment of forward dumps near Moc Chau, De Linares in last two weeks had decided reject this first assumption.

(*b*) Second hypothesis was that enemy would strike almost due West from present positions of 320th and 304th divisions through Moc Chau to Laos. Viet Minh had capability to mount such an offensive both in respect of LOC and in advance supply arrangements.

(*c*) Third possibility was that, after a feint in direction of Moc Chau, Viet Minh might attack Southern Delta in force through gap in French fortified line, which exists on Southeastern fringe of delta perimeter.

4. Colonel Nemo, in explaining nature of delta warfare, said that struggle was carried out at two levels—"the asphalt and the mud." French and Vietnamese control asphalt in daytime laboriously reopening lines of communications which were sealed at night, while Viet Minh in many areas control the mud, the inundated rice paddy.

5. Over-all impression was that French and Vietnamese are bogged down in delta and that neither side can gain successful advantage there. Meanwhile, Viet Minh has military initiative and Franco-Vietnamese forces in North are merely on precariously held air strips or fortified hedge hog positions in territory completely dominated by Viet Minh.

Situation may change in delta if and when proposed 54 commando battalions of Vietnamese Army are trained and are able to operate in delta, thus relieving regular French and Vietnamese battalions for offensive operations. However, there is no sign of this as yet.

6. General Clark will formulate his recommendations for possible United States military assistance upon his return to Tokyo. His preliminary thinking, however, is to recommend that United States if possible, supply sufficient helicopters to enable airlift of 1 battalion. A helicopter transport capability in General Clark's view is ideally suited to conditions of lake and island warfare which characterize delta hostilities and isolated French-held air strips in interior. General Clark likewise hopes to be able to release C–47 aircraft to increase Franco-Vietnamese transport capability, but said to me that he did

not think they could be made available before mid-April (Paris telegram 5169 March 21 repeated Saigon 203 refers).[2]

McCLINTOCK

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[2] The reference telegram is described in footnote 1, p. 389.

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 141

Discussion Paper for United States-French Political Conversations, Washington, March 1953[1]

SECRET
FPT D-4/1

[WASHINGTON,] March 24, 1953.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON INDOCHINA

U.S. OBJECTIVES

The US objective is to obtain a clearer idea of French intentions and capabilities in Indochina. We would hope to ascertain how Franco-Vietnamese military plans and such additional US aid as it may be possible to contemplate can be combined so as to bring about within the next 24 months a defeat or at least a serious decrease in the effectiveness of the regular Viet Minh divisions in Tonkin. (It is recognized that the problem is not wholly military but that political factors particularly those relating to the Vietnamese concept of French intentions and capabilities are highly important.) We will not achieve this objective *in toto* at these conversations.

FRENCH POSITION

The French Ministers may be expected to discuss recent developments in Indochina. They will recognize that results have been insufficient but they will state that the development of national armies particularly in Viet Nam will guarantee improvement. They will express the confident hope that within the next 15 to 18 months control of the entire south can be regained and a real offensive mounted in the north.

The French will state that they will require additional aid if these results are to be achieved. We do not know what their request will be. They will endeavor to transfer to us as much as possible of the burden on the French budget of the conduct of operations in Indochina. They may suggest modifications in the MSA Act to make this feasible.

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[1] This paper, presumably drafted in the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, is one in a series of background papers prepared for the Mayer visit. This draft reflects the comments of and working level approval by an interdepartmental steering group headed by Ridgway B. Knight, Deputy Director of the Office of Western European Affairs, which coordinated the preparation of background material for the talks with Mayer. For additional documentation on these preparations, see volume VI.

POSITION TO BE PRESENTED

The US should express understanding and admiration for the effort made by the French over the past seven years in Indochina and great satisfaction at the increased momentum being given to formation of national armies. The US should express willingness to study any stated request for US aid both budget-supporting and in end-items provided the necessary approval of Congress can be obtained but will be unable at this time to make an over-all commitment (see paper on US Aid to France).[3] The US should stress, however, the necessity for the development by the French of an over-all strategic concept for the aggressive prosecution of hostilities in Indochina which would enable responsible US officials in the Departments of State, MSA and Defense to advocate continued and additional financial support for the Franco-Vietnamese effort in Indochina. The US would hope that the French would propose to us methods for achieving a common understanding as to future operations and as to the analysis of results of past operations in Indochina. The US should emphasize of course that there is no thought on our part of participating in either the planning of operations or in responsibility for their execution.

DISCUSSION

The following notes are designed to assist in the discussion by the US delegation of certain aspects of the Indochina situation.

Need for Over-all Strategic Plan. What is desired here is a plan which would specify the military capabilities and actions required to achieve our objective—the defeat or at least a serious decrease in the effectiveness of the regular Viet Minh divisions in Tonkin. Since, in 1950–1951, the Franco-Vietnamese troops successfully defeated a major enemy attempt to seize control of the entire Delta, the military situation has not developed satisfactorily for our side. The 1952–1953 campaign has been a disappointment. There had been high hopes of effective offensive operations by our side. At the French request, we helped make it possible temporarily to double the transport aircraft (C–47) available to the French High Command with the idea that the total of 100 C–47s thus provided would make possible important parachute drops as part of an offensive campaign to seek out and destroy enemy forces and supplies. Instead the enemy seized the initiative, overrunning the Thai country, and, while the added transport planes were of vital help in providing an air lift to beleaguered French positions and while the French obtained a brilliant defensive success at

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[3] Several papers in the FPT D–2 series deal with the question of overall aid to France. (Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 141)

Na San, present indications seem to point at further enemy initiatives rather than at any important offensive activity by our side in the immediate future. (We are not at present, however, aware of specific French planning.)

We have been impressed with the apparent insufficiency of combatworthy mobile reserves on our side. Actual and planned increases in native forces should help to supply these needs either directly or indirectly by releasing high quality combat troops now pinned down in static defense or internal security activities. Whether total requirements will require the French to furnish fresh troops from outside the area beyond currently planned replacements is unknown at present.

Chinese Communist potential. French political and military leaders have occasionally indicated to us their fear that, if the Viet Minh appeared on the verge of defeat as a result of a Franco-Vietnamese offensive, the Chinese Communists might decide on a massive invasion of Tonkin perhaps under the "volunteer" disguise and certainly with extensive air support. There is some reason to believe that this thought has been one of the factors which has led the French Government to envisage an indecisive conduct of operations. It would be most helpful if the French Ministers can depart from their conversations in Washington convinced that they are participating in an over-all Far Eastern policy which will contain Communist China and deter aggression from Communist China. Under present conditions the French share in this program would be the defeat of the Viet Minh as a demonstration of the free world ability to meet aggression with effective force.

Economic Factors. We would hope in the forthcoming discussions to arrange for talks on various economic matters in which DMS and MSA would participate. Among these are two major matters on which it would be helpful to secure current French views. We have been encouraged at the recent increase in Vietnamese financial contribution to the war effort but it is generally believed that the residents of Viet-Nam, including French businessmen, could make an even greater contribution. In the second place, the artificial rate of exchange between the franc and piaster increases the burden upon the French budget of conducting the war in Indochina. There are factors of both an economic and a political nature which bear upon both of these problems and they are probably not susceptible to an easy clear-cut solution. We should explore French views indicating our concern particularly in view of the fact that these two items apparently increase the total burden currently carried by the French and the American taxpayer in Indochina. (The apparent French hope to increase our share of the Indochina burden makes particularly advisable direct participation by us in the consideration of these two matters.)

Political Factors. We should ask the French for an appraisal of political progress in Viet-Nam and in the other Associated States with particular reference to evolution toward the assumption of greater responsibility in all fields by the Associated States. We should express an interest in the proposed reorganization of French administration and representation in Indochina in order more closely to accord with the status of the Associated States as sovereign members of the French Union.

United States Relations with the Associated States. When M. Letourneau was here in June 1952, a special meeting was held at which the Ambassadors of Cambodia and Vietnam were present in order to receive a report on French–United States conversations affecting them. We have had indications from the Vietnamese Ambassador here that he regards a more effective participation as desirable. On the other hand, Bao Dai has stated that he does not want a participation which would put his country in the light of a mere appendage to the French delegation. At the same time, effective Vietnamese independence and the assumption of independent responsibilities in the military field are increasing steadily. The question of how relations between the United States and Viet-Nam particularly in matters of military and financial aid are to be conducted may be expected to be a delicate one. It is a question on which we should urge our French friends to let us have their thinking and to give us some suggestions. We should avoid if possible being put in the position of taking any specific initiative. It would be most desirable for the French to make some workable suggestions before the Vietnamese bring pressure to bear on us.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 138th Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, March 25, 1953 [1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 138th meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United

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[1] This record was prepared on Mar. 26 by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on the basis of his notes of the meeting. Similar records for almost all NSC meetings held during the Eisenhower administration exist at the Eisenhower Library. There is no evidence that the memoranda in this series were formally approved by the Council or circulated to its members on a regular basis. For additional extracts of this memorandum of discussion, see volume VI.

States;[2] the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; and the Director for Mutual Security. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director, Bureau of the Budget;[3] the Deputy Secretary of Defense (for Items 3 and 4);[4] the Secretary of the Army[5] (for Items 3 and 4); the Secretary of the Navy[6] (for Items 3 and 4); the Secretary of the Air Force[7] (for Items 3 and 4); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army (for Items 3 and 4); the Chief of Naval Operations (for Items 3 and 4); the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force[8] (for Items 3 and 4); the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps[9] (for Items 3 and 4); Assistant Secretary of Defense Nash (for Items 3 and 4); Captain Paul L. de Vos, USN, Joint Chiefs of Staff (for Item 3); the Acting Director of Central Intelligence;[10] the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs;[11] the Special Assistant to the President for Cold War Planning;[12] the Military Liaison Officer; the Executive Secretary, NSC;[13] and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a general account of the main positions taken and the chief points made at this meeting.

. . . .

Secretary Dulles then went on to indicate that his problem regarding the French in Europe was bound up with Indo-China.[14] It was beyond the capabilities of France to shoulder the load represented by its commitments in Europe and its commitments in Southeast Asia. Accordingly, the forthcoming conversations must try to figure out a way to end the heavy drain, both military and economic, which Indo-China represented for France. Secretary Dulles indicated that he and other American officials would explore with the French visitors a program designed to bring about a situation in Indo-China which within a year or eighteen months would substantially reduce the strain on French human and material resources. Secretary Dulles did not expect to reach any final conclusions or to make any commitments during this visit, but it was a great opportunity, since we were dealing with a man in the person of Premier Mayer who was completely frank and wholly dedicated to our objectives in Europe.

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[2] Richard M. Nixon.

[3] Joseph M. Dodge.

[4] Roger M. Kyes. Items 3 and 4 concerned national security policy in general.

[5] Robert T. Stevens.

[6] Robert B. Anderson.

[7] Harold E. Talbott.

[8] Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg.

[9] Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.

[10] Frank G. Wisner.

[11] Robert Cutler.

[12] C. D. Jackson.

[13] James S. Lay, Jr.

[14] These remarks by Secretary Dulles were made in the context of discussion of the position of the United States in the forthcoming talks with the French Ministers in Washington.

Secretary Dulles then informed the Council that he had just come from a meeting with fourteen members of Congress.[15] He gained the impression from this meeting that these Congressmen felt that if the American people could be given reason to believe that the difficulties in Indo-China will end by the French according Indo-China a real autonomy, and if a program could be devised giving real promise of military and political success in Indo-China, the Congress would at least be open-minded in its consideration of continued United States assistance to the French in Indo-China.

In response to Secretary Dulles' remarks, the President said that two ideas immediately occurred to him. Would it not be advisable, he inquired, to arrange for Premier Mayer to speak to the American people on the radio or on TV, and give a full explanation of the French attitude and objectives in Indo-China? Such a speech could go far to counteract the familiar belief that the French desire to perpetuate colonialism in Indo-China. Mayer could explain the lively desire of the French to get out of Indo-China and the real reasons which prevented them from doing so at this stage in the hostilities.[16]

. . . .

Mr. Wisner then went on to brief the Council on the difficult military situation in Indo-China, in the course of which he underscored the views of the Secretary of State as to the serious drain that the campaign there represented for the French.[17] In the course of his briefing, Mr. Wisner noted the existence of two schools of thought on the Indo-China problem within the United States Government. One school insisted that there could be no improvement in the situation until military success had been achieved against the Communists. The other insisted that it was impossible to make any significant military progress until political improvements and a greater degree of autonomy for the native governments had been secured. The Central Intelligence Agency believed that this difference was sterile and missed the real point of the problem, which was that military and political progress must go along hand in hand.

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[15] No record of the meeting under reference has been found in the Department of State files.

[16] The President's second point dealt with a subject other than Indochina.

[17] These remarks were a portion of the comments made by Wisner on significant world developments affecting the security of the United States.

611.51/4-253

United States Minutes of the Meeting Between President Eisenhower and the Prime Minister of France (Mayer) on the Presidential Yacht U.S.S. "Williamsburg", March 26, 1953, 11:30 a. m.[1]

[Extracts]

SECRET

PARTICIPANTS

U.S.

The President
The Secretary of State
Mr. Matthews
Mr. Merchant[2]
Mr. Allison
Mr. MacArthur
Ambassador Dillon
Ambassador Heath
Mr. McCardle[3]
Mr. Knight
The Secretary of the Treasury
Mr. Burgess[4]
The Secretary of Defense
Mr. Nash
The Director of Mutual Security
General Roberts
Mr. Labouisse[5]
Ambassador Lodge[6]

French

Prime Minister Mayer
Minister of Foreign Affairs Bidault
Minister to Associated States Letourneau
Minister of Finance Bourges-Maunoury
Ambassador Bonnet
M. Alphand[7]
M. de la Tournelle
M. Tezenas du Montcel
M. de Clermont-Tonnerre[8]
M. Burin des Roziers[9]
M. Daridan[10]
M. Seydoux[11]

. . . .

President Eisenhower then referred to the Indo-Chinese war and expressed his full realization of the limiting effects which it exerts on France's efforts in Europe. The United States is very sympathetic and has tried to help. Indeed we recognize that it is part of the general struggle against Communism and that it is not merely a French colonial effort. Mr. Mayer was advised to stress this point very clearly in any public declaration which he may make while in the United States. The President explained that this is essential because unfortunately many Americans continue to think of the war in Indo-China as a French colonial operation rather than as a part of the struggle of the free world against the forces of Soviet Communism.

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[1] These minutes were circulated as document FPT MIN-1, Apr. 2, 1953. The extracts printed here constitute the record of the discussions concerning Indochina which occurred at the meeting. The European Defense Community, overall aid to France, the Saar, and other problems of common concern were also discussed.

A summary of this meeting was transmitted to Paris in telegram 4992 of Mar. 26; for text, see volume VI. A partial text is also printed in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Book 9, pp. 17-18.

[2] Livingston T. Merchant, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs.

[3] Carl W. McCardle, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

[4] W. Randolph Burgess, Deputy to the Secretary of the Treasury.

[5] Henry R. Labouisse, Chief of the Mutual Security Agency Mission in France.

[6] Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. Representative at the United Nations.

[7] Hervé Alphand, Permanent French Representative at the NATO Council.

[8] Thierry de Clermont-Tonnerre, Director of the Cabinet, French Ministry of Finance.

[9] Etienne Burin des Roziers, technical adviser to Prime Minister Mayer.

[10] Jean Daridan, Minister, French Embassy.

[11] Roger Seydoux, Minister, French Embassy.

President Eisenhower then said that the United States was most interested in hearing of any French program for the solution of the Indo-China question. He explained that he did not mean thereby complete victory. Knowledge of such a program was necessary to the United States so that it could see where and how it could be of assistance.

. . . .

Mr. Mayer expressed appreciation for the fact that President Eisenhower had defined the true objectives of France in Indochina.

He thanked the President for his advice as to how the French effort in Indochina should be presented to the American public and said that he would give his greatest consideration to this counsel. He pointed out that during the seven-year-old struggle great progress had been made toward the independence of the Three Associated States. As to the military effort against Communism in Southeast Asia, it was obvious that its purpose was to bar the road to this part of the world to Communist penetration. It must be noted, however, that recently the axis of the Communist offensive had taken a new direction and now seems to be aimed at India across Laos and Siam.

With reference to the independence granted to the Three Associated States in the agreements of March 8, 1948 [*1949*], this is now being completed through the development of national armies. The French objective is both political and military and includes not only both the development of a popular basis for the local governments but also the creation of the means to permit these States to insure their own defense. They must be able to conduct the pacification of their own countries with their own forces, and the creation of these national armies constitutes the main French objective at this time.

Mr. Mayer said that he was very glad that General Mark Clark had visited Indochina and that he will be very interested by his report concerning the development of the armies of the Associated States. He would also be interested by the report on the methods used by the United States in forming ROK forces. However in connection with their application in Indochina, it must be remembered that while the two situations present many points in common, there also exist many differences. At a later meeting Mr. Letourneau will give details of the recent decisions reached in the agreements with Bao Dai concerning the development of the Vietnamese army and concerning zones to be turned over to that army for pacification.

There seem to be no differences concerning the objective to be reached. Both the United States and France recognize the importance of Indochina and its direct connection with the European situation, and Mr. Mayer would be very glad to hear what the United States can do to help with the faster development of the local forces so urgently needed for the twin tacks of front-line fighting and pacification.

. . . .

President Eisenhower then asked concerning the political objectives of France and Indo-China and whether or not steps had been taken to obtain the confidence of the local peoples. He has heard that the Vietnamese have little faith in obtaining autonomy from the present struggle. This is not an idle question as unless the United States public believes this to be a fact it will be extremely difficult to do more than we are doing at present to help the French in Indo-China.

The Prime Minister asked Mr. Letourneau to speak to this point.

Mr. Letourneau stated that it was the constant French concern to obtain fuller and broader Vietnamese support and that every day there seemed to be some improvement. The first elections held in Vietnam in January had been a remarkable success, not only because of the very large number of voters but because all had voted for national candidates and not for Communists.

Another proof of this improving situation could be found in the development of the armies of the Associated States. When it had been decided with Bao Dai two years ago to create a Vietnamese army it had been very difficult to find officer candidates. At the present time, however, these were forthcoming in enough numbers to fill the training schools. He pointed out that there had never been any difficulty in finding enough enlisted men and that within the financial limitations, all of the needed manpower had been provided on a volunteer basis. Therefore so far conscription is not necessary. Now that the Viet-Minh is clearly the agent not only of Communism but of the traditional enemy—China—the populations are providing greater support to their governments and are demonstrating much better their understanding that the current fighting is in behalf of their independence.

President Eisenhower then referred to Mr. Mayer's statement about "greater United States aid". First the United States needs to know the French plans for the conduct of the war, both politically and militarily, in order to see how the United States can help and so that United States public support may be enlisted.

Mr. Mayer answered that he thought that the French delegation could show how the United States could contribute to the development of the armies of the Associated States. He also stated that he recognized that political and military questions were tied together and reaffirmed that France's policy was two-fold: develop the armies of the Associated States and develop the political life to sustain these States as supporting entities.

Mr. Letourneau then added that the recent Dalat decisions,[12] which will be implemented subject to financial limitations, can result in a military plan which within two years can achieve perhaps not a complete victory but at least a situation in which the Viet-Minh would be a negligible factor in Indo-China. This plan of course would be on the assumption that there was no material increase in aid from China or the USSR. He also insisted that there had to be parallel efforts in both the political and military fields as it would be a folly to conduct the present long and costly struggle only to lead to an eventual Viet-Minh takeover at some later date.

President Eisenhower said that the nature and extent of the assistance desired by France from the United States would be considered in detail at a subsequent meeting.

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[12] See footnote 3, p. 395.

611.51/3–2753: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

[Extract] [2]

SECRET WASHINGTON, March 27, 1953—5:45 p. m.

5001. French delegation met with Secretary, Secretary of Treasury, Director Mutual Security (Defense represented by Assistant Secretary Nash) for three hours yesterday afternoon. Ambassadors Cambodia and Vietnam attended initial portion session devoted general exposé Indochina situation. Following their departure further discussion

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[1] Drafted by Robert H. McBride, the Officer in Charge of French-Iberian Affairs. Repeated for information to London as telegram 6434, to Bonn as telegram 4719, and to Saigon as telegram 1906.

[2] The extract printed here constitutes that portion of the telegram summarizing the discussion on Indochina which occurred at the ministerial plenary session of Mar. 26, at which 31 American and 33 French officials were present. European defense, possible arrangements for periodic U.S.–U.K.–French consultation, and other questions of common concern also received consideration. For complete text of this telegram, see volume VI. U.S. minutes of proceedings were prepared as document FPT MIN–2, Apr. 6. (611.51/4–653).

Indochina problem took place and Secretary also replied to points made by Mayer to President during morning but which latter had not had time answer.[3] Last portion session devoted French desire recognition her worldwide position and east–west trade.

Mayer in introducing Letourneau made it clear Vietnam and Cambodia independent states and their peoples fighting maintain their freedom. Letourneau stressed French interest in creating strong free states Indochina that would later not lose through political weakness what they had gained militarily. He also highlighted importance recent "Dalat decisions" providing increased Vietnamese financial effort and creation 54 new Vietnamese battalions comprising 40,000 men. He said new units would be light, mobile type best suited Indochinese war and would result in more rapid pacification many areas permitting release French troops for offensive operations. He noted plan for 54 additional battalions in 1954 if funds available and concluded no alternative to Dalat decisions now existed. While he could not promise complete victory he believed implementation this plan which is reasonable and practical would result in breaking back of Vietminh in 24 months. Finally he stated his conviction true Vietnamese nationalism resided Bao Dai and his government and supporters and not Vietminh who were Soviet-controlled.

Cambodian and Vietnamese Ambassadors made brief remarks. Secretary concluded this portion meeting reiterating our realization this was common war which while now restricted Korea and Indochina, might break out anywhere. He expressed hope for program commensurate with peril which we realized might call for additional assistance our part. He concluded such assistance depended on many factors most important was whether plan France and Associated States was practical.

After departure Associated States Ambassadors Secretary stated we understood French feeling tiredness in Indochina after seven years warfare but expressed conviction feeling would evaporate in face of positive constructive program and concluded we must not be immobilized by fear.

Mayer and Letourneau posed questions what we would do event Chinese Communist offensive Indochina and if we didn't think Korean armistice might cause considerable risk Chinese attack Indochina. Secretary said he thought Chinese Communist attack unlikely because they realize would start chain disasters far outweighing any possible gains and while there no question land invasion of China, vista of trouble through sea and air attack would be strong deterrent to them. Nash stated recent talks on five-power cooperation Southeast Asia had made considerable progress and mentioned forthcoming meeting Honolulu where five-power talks would continue on invitation Admiral Radford.[4] Secretary agreed might be necessary for military reasons talk about what we would do in event evacuation but concluded firmly he convinced there would be no evacuation. He also noted, in unlikely event Korean armistice, that if Chinese obviously simply concluded such arrangement order transport troops attack Indochina, armistice would have automatically failed purpose. Finally he referred to integral connection two wars as contained President's State Union Message.[5]

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[3] See extracts from the U.S. minutes of the morning meeting, *supra*.

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DULLES

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[4] For documentation on the meeting of military representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and New Zealand at Pearl Harbor, Apr. 6–10, and other material on five-power planning for the defense of Southeast Asia, see volume XII.

[5] See editorial note, p. 376.

Editorial Note

On the morning of Friday, March 27, 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles met with French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault to discuss issues other than Indochina. At the same time, George M. Humphrey, Secretary of the Treasury; Harold E. Stassen, Director for Mutual Security; and C. Douglas Dillon, United States Ambassador in France, met with French Premier René Mayer, Finance Minister Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, and other officials, on economic matters. In the afternoon, a second ministerial plenary meeting was held at the Department of State. The 69 participants included Secretary Dulles, Secretary Humphrey, Stassen, Premier Mayer, Foreign Minister Bidault, and Finance Minister Bourgès-Maunoury. Indochina was not discussed in any substantial manner. Records of these meetings are in file 611.51 and in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 141. For information on the proceedings, see telegrams 5015, 5011, and 5016, all dated March 28, printed in volume VI.

In addition, Jean Letourneau, French Minister for the Associated States, and his advisers met with Frank C. Nash, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and other American officials at the Pentagon on the morning of March 27. Letourneau defended French military strategy in Indochina, pointing out that far from assuming a static posture, the French were carrying out offense operations. He also stressed that the military situation did not allow for conventional military operations. The Minister also outlined plans for increasing Vietnamese responsibility and the size of the Vietnamese National Army. He then set forth plans for pacification to be carried out by newly created Vietnamese commando units while the regular French expeditionary force carried the battle to large organized Viet Minh forces. The French aim was the destruction of the main Viet Minh battle corps in 1955. Letourneau emphasized that execution of these plans required additional outside financial support. On the afternoon of March 27, General Paul Allard, Chief of Staff of the French Expeditionary Corps in Indochina, provided United States officials with additional information.

The United States verbatim records of the Pentagon sessions of March 27 are in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 138. The strategic plans presented by Letourneau and General Allard are further described in documentation which follows.

611.51/3-3053 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

[Extracts] [2]

SECRET WASHINGTON, March 30, 1953—7:45 p. m.

5040. Paris pass Bruce.[3] President presided over final meeting with Prime Minister Mayer and French delegation at White House March 28.

. . . .

Reference to Indo-China, President said of course we were intent upon doing nothing which in any way might increase France's difficulties there. Instead we wanted to help. As matter of fact, statement was now being prepared within US Government concerning Far East, and Indo-China and Korea would be linked therein.[4] President added that US representatives had been somewhat disappointed in plan which had been outlined by Mr. Letourneau at Pentagon on March 27 a. m.,[5] particularly by slowness of its timetable. He wanted to make clear, however, that while there was no US commitment to support this plan likewise there had been no US refusal to do so. Plan required more careful study and President noted that this should be possible as Mr. Letourneau was planning to stay until March 31 p. m.

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[1] Drafted by Ridgway B. Knight, Deputy Director of the Office of Western European Affairs. Repeated for information to London as telegram 6492, to Saigon as telegram 1920, and to Bonn as telegram 4759.

[2] That portion of this telegram dealing with Indochina is printed here. The Saar, European defense, and the Final Communiqué were also discussed at the White House meeting of Mar. 28. For complete text, see volume VI.

[3] David K. E. Bruce, Special U.S. Observer at the Interim Committee of the European Defense Community; former Ambassador to France and Under Secretary of State.

[4] The reference is presumably to NSC 148, "United States Policies in the Far East," Apr. 6, 1953, which contained a statement of policy on that subject. For text of NSC 148, see volume XII.

[5] See editorial note, *supra*.

Re Indo-China plan, Mayer said concerning slowness of its timetable that while raising forces takes time it might perhaps be possible to accelerate this even if human factors involved might lead to somewhat lower quality of forces. However perhaps more difficult is fact that there exists as yet no agreement concerning military requirements. Mayer suggested that elaboration of this plan could be completed in Saigon with participation of US officers which Pentagon might care to send there for this purpose and that this aspect of problem could thus be covered by further discussions between military technicians.

President said that US technicians will be glad to cooperate with French along above lines.

DULLES

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 141

Communiqué on United States–France Talks[1]

[Extract]

[WASHINGTON,] March 28, 1953.

. . . .

3. It was recognized that Communist aggressive moves in the Far East obviously are parts of the same pattern. Therefore, while the full burden of the fighting in Indochina falls on the forces of the French Union including those of the Associated States, and similarly the United States bears the heaviest burden in Korea, the prosecution of these operations cannot be successfully carried out without full recognition of their interdependence. This in turn requires the continuation of frequent diplomatic and military consultation between the two Governments.

The French Government reasserted its resolve to do its utmost to increase the effectiveness of the French and Associated States forces in Indochina, with a view to destroying the organized Communist forces and to bringing peace and prosperity to her free associates within the French Union, Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam. The Ambassadors of Viet-Nam and Cambodia were present and participated in this phase of the discussions.

Advantage was taken of this meeting to continue discussion of plans prepared by the High Command in Indochina for military action there. These plans are being developed with a view to achieving success in Indochina and are being given intensive study so as to determine how and to what extent the United States may be able to contribute matériel and financial support to their achievement.

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[1] For the full text of the final communiqué of the conversations between U.S. and French officials in Washington, Mar. 26–28, Department of State Press Release No. 160 of Mar. 28, see Department of State *Bulletin*, Apr. 6, 1953, pp. 491–492.

Obviously any armistice which might be concluded in Korea by the United Nations would be entered into in the hope that it would be a step toward peace. It was the view of both Governments, however, that should the Chinese Communist regime take advantage of such an armistice to pursue aggressive war elsewhere in the Far East, such action would have the most serious consequences for the efforts to bring about peace in the world and would conflict directly with the understanding on which any armistice in Korea would rest.

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Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 138

United States Verbatim Minutes of a Meeting of United States and French Representatives at the Pentagon, March 30, 1953, 9:30 a.m.[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET

M. Letourneau, Minister for Associated States, met with Mr. Frank Nash for the purpose of discussing pertinent aspects in the Indochina situation with emphasis on further clarification concerning French long-range strategic plans for continuing operations in Indochina. Present were French and U.S. staff officers, representatives of the Department of State, and Office of Director of Mutual Security.[2]

. . . .

Nash: At the White House meeting on Saturday morning,[3] you may remember President Eisenhower's comment to M. Mayer that the impression we had conveyed to the President of the discussions that we had with you and General Allard on Friday left us with some concern that the plan of operation was moving rather gradually. M. Mayer responded that it might be possible, if certain difficulties could be overcome, to accelerate the operation. Would you have any further comment on that this morning, sir?

Letourneau: In answer to Mr. Nash's question and the comments by the President, as the plan develops, opportunities and circumstances may arise which may render acceleration of the implementation possible.

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[1] A note accompanying these minutes, which were drafted in the Department of Defense, indicates that they were circulated with only superficial editing and without verification by the participants. The source text is date-stamped Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State, Apr. 8, 1953.

Letourneau and Nash also met at the Pentagon on the morning of Mar. 31. Similar minutes of that session are in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 138.

[2] The minutes indicate that Ambassador Heath was among the American officials present.

[3] The White House meeting of Saturday morning, Mar. 28, is described in telegram 5040 to Paris, Mar. 30; for pertinent extracts, see p. 435.

After talking with the Commander-in-Chief, there are difficulties of course, but it may be possible to present a plan which would satisfy the exigencies of public opinion—a plan which might say we will do it in 6, 10, or 18 months. In that case, the end object of this plan would be only to please public opinion, but it would, in fact, be dishonest to say that it can be done in that manner. There are operational elements which the Chief of Staff, General Lecheres, is more capable of exposing to the United States staff which are conditioned in the one direction by climactic elements which limit operations to a certain number of months in the year, and more important, there are political considerations and plans. I would like to repeat what I have already said. Some people might prefer to hear plain strategic answers to the questions. I would like to repeat that the main characteristic of this Indochinese war is its mixture of the political and military aspects. It may be possible that the United States staff contemplates operations in Korea which might contemplate the termination of that operation in 6 months, but the problem is quite different in Indochina, so I would like to repeat this very important element. In Indochina you are dealing with a government which is in a period of consolidating itself—therefore, you cannot require everything immediately from such a government, as the United States and France. We are both playing a loyal game of independence to the countries concerned. We cannot substitute ourselves for that government because if we did we would never obtain the quantity of manpower that local government can obtain by its own means. Also, and more important, if you did not care to conduct political operations in parallel and at the same time as the military ones, the end result would be that you would leave Vietnam at the end of military operations in a weakened condition, so that at the moment when the last French trooper got on board, or even before that, the winner would be, in fact, the Communists, because you would have left a weakened state behind you. So you would have your people killed, your French boys, or other Vietnamese, for 5, 6, 7, or 8 years, for what particular reason? The state would be in a weakened condition and would not be able to defend itself, and they would, in fact, take over.

With respect to the slowness of the plan, I would like to say that as the plan develops there will undoubtedly be circumstances which will be more favorable and which will allow some acceleration, but the object of the thing is to be able to get these Viet Minh units destroyed and leave them in such a condition that they cannot resupply themselves, so this is political as well as military and does not depend on large quantities of dollars or large quantities of ammunition. It depends on an effort which we must all make to get it to work.

I would not be honest even if I obtained a larger contribution in dollars, I would not be honest if I said I can do it in 12 months, I would prefer to say I can do it in 24 months and be able to do it in 18 months. In general, and this pertains to the political comments, I hope that with the military increments, intelligent military comments will be made. Lastly, I would like to get rid of two considerations which I think appear in the minds of some of my U.S. colleagues and one of these bears on this plan. Some people say that the French have prepared a plan which takes long enough in implementation in order that they may, in fact, assure their stay in Indochina—in fact, they want to get entrenched in Indochina. Ambassador Heath may bear witness that the French have only one desire and that is to give up that country as soon as possible. I, myself, have to make vast efforts with my government and in parliamentary circles in order to bring home to them the necessity of continuing the battle, because many people say, what are we doing out there? We are not defending any French interests and if the free world is interested, let them come and get their people killed in its defense. Another consideration expressed, or which I feel may exist in the minds of some is that the French staff and military people are unfavorable to the development of a Vietnamese Army in order that the French may keep everything in hand themselves. Well, to admit this would be to admit that the French General Staff and high ranking officers are more stupid than they are. In general, regardless of what his nationality may be, he does not want to be put in a losing position and he wants to have the most number of cards in his hands. The French Staff know in this case that in view of the fact they cannot send reinforcements to Indochina, in view of their commitments elsewhere, the only card they do have is the creation of Vietnamese forces. So, those people who say the French staff is against it do not know what they are talking about. The French Command knows also that prudence and caution are necessary in view of the fact that they have the responsibility, and if they tried to go too fast it would tend to destroy their own work. This caution, which appears after discussion with the military and the politicians, is a political necessity and I, for my own part, would never reproach the French General Staff with any caution they exert and exhibit. I realize that full well and want to stress that it is in the creation of the Vietnam forces that there is the big chance. I apologize for having been somewhat violent in my expression.

Nash: Mr. Minister, we would not take that as any violent expression and would say rather that is a very articulate statement. You will appreciate I am sure, that the only motive we have in asking these questions, that may seem to be too pressing, is that we are going to have to be salesmen in behalf of our joint interests, salesmen to our

Congress in trying to convince them that there is a plan or a course of action that is being implemented in Indochina that holds promise of an ultimate solution. Not necessarily, as President Eisenhower said on Friday, the concept of total victory, because that concept today is something very difficult indeed to achieve. I am sure that your military understand that when our military seem to ask very pointed questions we are trying to get as clear a picture as we can of what you have in mind so that we, in turn, can lay that picture before them when we have to ask for additional aid.

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Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 141

United States Minutes of a Meeting of United States and French Representatives at the Department of State, March 30, 1953, 3:30 p. m.[1]

SECRET

LAT M–1

PRESENT

Department of State

Mr. Robertson[2]	FE
Ambassador Heath	
Messrs. Bonsal	PSA
Rosenson[3]	MN
Hoey[4]	PSA
Beigel	WE
Bane	WE
Tyson	PSA
Shaw	PSA
Kattenburg	DIR/DRF
Schmukler	DIR/DRF
Blanchet	S/S–S
DeSeabra	TC
Miss Milne	MN

Office of the Director for Mutual Security

Mr. Paul

Mutual Security Agency

Messrs. Hayes[5]
Clay[6]
Nason[7]
Bartlett (MSA, Saigon)

Department of the Treasury

Messrs. Glendinning[8]
Wood[9]

Department of Defense

Dr. Kenny[10]

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[1] Circulated as document LAT M–1, Apr. 6, 1953.

[2] Walter S. Robertson was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs on Mar. 27, 1953, succeeding John M. Allison. Robertson entered into office on Apr. 8.

[3] Alexander M. Rosenson, Chief of the Monetary Affairs Staff.

[4] Robert E. Hoey, Officer in Charge, Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs.

[5] Samuel P. Hayes, Jr., Assistant Director for the Far East, Mutual Security Agency.

[6] Eugene H. Clay, Assistant to Hayes.

[7] John B. Nason, Indochina Officer, Mutual Security Agency.

[8] C. Dillon Glendinning, Deputy Director, Office of International Finance, Department of the Treasury.

[9] James E. Wood, Chief of the European Division, Office of International Finance, Department of the Treasury.

[10] Norris G. Kenny, Deputy Director, Office of Foreign Economic Defense Affairs, Department of Defense.

French:

Messrs. Letourneau, Minister for the Associated States
Tezenas du Montcel, General-Director of the Ministry for Associated States
Pierre Millet, Counselor of the French Embassy Washington for Far East
Raymond Offroy, Diplomatic Counselor, Office of the High Commissioner, Saigon

Mr. Bonsal observed that the success of the discussions with M. Letourneau over the past few days had been gratifying. The previous talks had been primarily concerned with military matters, but political and economic factors were also involved in the problems of Indochina. The task before them at this meeting was to consider certain economic questions which attended the military effort in Indochina.

I. *Exchange of views on the effect of the present franc piaster rate on the cost of the war in Indochina*

Mr. Bonsal explained that the US was concerned with the existence of an exchange rate between the Indochinese piaster and the French franc which appeared to increase the financial burden of the war in Indochina on the French budget. The US recognized that local economic and political factors were involved in any decision looking to a readjustment of the piaster exchange rate. Nevertheless, we were anxious to hear M. Letourneau's views on this problem.

M. Letourneau replied that the adjustment of the piaster exchange rate was a much discussed issue in France and that the Government had been repeatedly asked to devalue the piaster. He wished to make clear certain reasons which made devaluation extremely difficult. The rate of 17 francs to one piaster had been fixed shortly after the war and was set on the basis of the prewar rate with approximate adjustments for the comparative inflation of monetary circulation in France and Indochina. As result of the Pau accord, the French Government is unable to revise the rate of exchange without the consent of the three States of Indochina. These States had only recently become independent and were fearful of any diminution of their prestige. It was not clear that a readjustment of the rate would secure sufficient financial advantages to justify the protests which devaluation would provoke. The majority of the expenditures for the war in Indochina was made in France, and for this purpose francs were required. The benefit of devaluation would only be a short-run benefit because it would ultimately result in higher price levels in Indochina. Devaluation, moreover, would not result in an appreciable diminution in transfers. From September 1951 to August 1952 the total value of commercial transfers amounted in value to 125 billion francs, and the value of goods entering Saigon amounted to 115 billion francs—a difference of only 10 billion francs. This 10 billion francs would include expenses accessory to imports. Bank transfers and transfers of savings and capital amounted to 55 billion francs. Postal transfers amounted to 20 billion francs, of which 16 billion francs were attributable to the military. M. Letourneau said that he was prepared to give to Mr. Sprouse in Paris a copy of a staff study on this question. Mr. Bonsal said that this data would be most welcome.

Mr. Glendinning said that he appreciated the delicacy of the financial and political problem. The US Government knew, he said, that decision could only be made by the countries concerned in the first instance. He wished to know whether, if the exchange rate were left unchanged, other measures of an internal nature might be adopted to bring prices into line. If the rate were left unchanged, would the situation become worse? M. Letourneau explained that it was difficult to put restrictions on the volume of imports from France. Viet Nam was strongly opposed to such restrictions. French nationals would have to pay if tax measures were chosen as a solution. He also pointed out that when the expeditionary forces leave Indochina some day in the future, this will create grave economic consequences. It was necessary to keep this in mind in the formulation of current policy.

Mr. Hayes said that he recognized that there was a technical difficulty in estimating the burden put upon the French budget by this unrealistic exchange rate. In absolute terms, however, it seemed to the US that a sizeable sum of money was involved. It was his understanding that about 250 billion francs were used for piaster expenditures. M. Letourneau said that he thought that this estimate was very much too high. Mr. Hayes said that a recent MSA study had estimated that devaluation to a 10-franc rate might result in a saving to the French budget of $170 million to $200 million annually. He explained that the US Congress would be seriously concerned to judge the truth of this estimate. If there were not a clear financial case for devaluation, it was most important to be able to provide the Congress with a forceful statistical explanation why there was not. M. Letourneau again said that he was quite prepared to provide the necessary data. French experts were constantly working on this problem.

Mr. Rosenson asked whether it would be possible, after this data became available, to have a meeting with the French to consider this data at the technical level. M. Letourneau said that it could be discussed with the Paris Embassy.

Dr. Kenny asked whether local currency was used to pay French soldiers. M. Letourneau replied affirmatively but said that they also allotted a certain percentage of their salary in francs to their families at home.

Mr. Hayes asked whether he was correct in thinking that it was not merely a budgetary question which was involved but also a problem of the influence of devaluation upon the rate of capital investment and transfer. M. Letourneau said this was true. He said that the problem of transfers was a result of a lack of confidence in the future of the country. Contrary to the opinion of many, devaluation would not discourage transfers.

Mr. Bonsal said that the statistical information which M. Letourneau had said he would make available would be most helpful. He added that the US recognized that a delicate security problem was involved and that due caution would be used in dealing with this information.

II. *Exchange of views on contributions by residents of Viet Nam, including businessmen, toward the increased cost of the war in Indochina*

Mr. Bonsal invited M. Letourneau to comment on the possibility of increasing the local contribution to the war in Indochina through new taxation measures. He noted that the US recognized that the contribution from local taxation to the military effort had recently increased from 30 to 50 billion francs. It was apparent, however, that in certain quarters in Indochina extraordinary profits were being made as a result of the war. He asked M. Letourneau if he could specify certain types of taxation which would draw upon these profits.

M. Letourneau said that he agreed that there probably were certain new sources of revenue of which due advantage was not being taken. He agreed that current resources could be increased. He pointed out, however, that one difficulty in the creation of an adequate tax system in that country was the fact that the Ministry of Finance had only recently been organized and was only beginning to be abreast of the work. 1953 was the first year in which Viet Nam had ever had a proper budget providing accurate data on tax yields. M. Letourneau said that French experts were at the present time working with the Vietnamese to work out an adequate tax system. One difficulty was the fact that some of the largest profits were irregular and difficult to trace for tax purposes. At present the large source of revenue was derived from customs duties. Some revenue also came from direct taxation. The French were now trying to persuade the authorities to enlarge direct taxation. Two bases of taxability are evident: 1. external signs (e.g. automobiles) and 2. fixed assessments, ("Imposts forfaitaires") based on imposing an arbitrary tax assessment which would have to be paid unless the taxpayer proved it was too high.) He hoped that the tax system would be reformed by the fiscal year 1954. He observed that it might be possible to increase revenue from taxes by increasing customs duties. This, however, encouraged traders to raise their prices, and it was necessary to be cautious in this matter. A foreign exchange tax also held disadvantages since the savings of soldiers had to be exempted from such a tax, and any discrimination among kinds of taxpayers would be an invitation to fraud. Finally, M. Letourneau said that even if several million francs were raised by means of a good tax reform, this in itself would not solve the problem. He pointed out that he had financial experts working on this problem and that a tax specialist may be called to Indochina from the French Ministry of Finance.

M. Letourneau asked whether the US had encountered similar difficulties in taxing wartime profits in Korea. Mr. Bonsal replied that Korea differed in that there were no substantial export products and that the basic wealth of the area was much less. We had, however, encountered similar problems. M. Letourneau asked whether a foreign exchange tax had been put into use. Mr. Bartlett said that such a tax was in operation in the Philippines. Mr. Glendinning said that the US was sending a tax expert representing all agencies to advise the Korean Government. M. Letourneau said he would be grateful for relevant information on Korea.

Mr. Hayes asked whether there was a chance of improving the tax system in Indochina by means of better administration and collection. M. Letourneau said that the tax collection was sufficient in the large cities but that it was not sufficient in rural areas where there was military insecurity and the tax collectors encountered competition from religious organizations who collected their own taxes (Cao-Dai, Hoa Hao, etc.).

III. *Questions relating to US current economic aid program*

(*a*) *Coordination of US economic aid program with French, UN, and Colombo Plan economic aid programs*

Mr. Hayes invited M. Letourneau to comment on possible means of coordinating these programs. M. Letourneau said that at the moment there was no coordination among them at all. 1) As to the Colombo Plan, the Associated States had participated in the last meeting, but the French had not been informed of possible developments or advised of any concrete proposals. He said that the Colombo Plan currently had no effect on Indochina. He believed that the Colombo Plan now had only small credits at its disposal, and that the first countries to benefit would be within the Commonwealth. 2) UN assistance had been mainly through the loan of experts and through grants to trainees from FAO and especially from WHO. The contribution had been limited, however, and the fact that the Associated States were not members of the UN was a complication although they were members of the UN's Specialized Agencies. 3) As to US contributions, which were the largest source of aid, there was not sufficient coordination between American and French personnel. The coordination of commercial aid was satisfactory, but better coordination was required for the utilization of counterpart funds and the application of French and US technical aid. He believed it would be useful to have talks so that each country might know the intentions of the other. 4) French aid had taken various forms. The French had assisted in the formulation of a foreign exchange program for all three states of Indochina under which France makes available dollars and pounds for the goods the Indochinese wish to buy. The French funds had also been used to finance reconstruction projects. A total of about three billion francs had been set aside for these purposes. He noted as an example of a reconstruction project the repair of the bridge at Hanoi. M. Letourneau said it would be desirable if the requirements of the Associated States could be ascertained in advance. He said he was open to any suggestions as to possible arrangements for coordination of French and US aid.

Mr. Hayes said that in other countries the US had found it profitable to arrange for discussions on two levels: at a level at which over-all development planning over a long period was considered, and at an operational level at which coordination on particular projects was considered. M. Letourneau said that he was prepared to arrange for consultation, whether official or unofficial to avoid competition between the US and France. He suggested that a more detailed discussion of means of coordination should be arranged when Mr. Bartlett returned to Saigon.

Mr. Bartlett said that there were two agencies now existing which might take up the problem of long-term planning: the Comité du Plan and the Effort de Guerre (Comité du Mobilisation). M. Letourneau said that the Effort de Guerre was the only agency which would be able to operate in cooperation with the three Indochinese states. He said that he would inform us what was being done in the Effort de Guerre. This would be discussed further in Saigon.

Mr. Bonsal suggested that ideally it would be the responsibility of the Viet-namese to coordinate the activities to be undertaken with external aid. Mr. Bartlett said that STEM was keeping Mr. Valls[11] informed of current US program activities. He thought, however, that since the form of French economical aid was now to be extended in a new form, the need for coordination would appear to be more imperative. M. Letourneau said that he would like to meet with Mr. Bartlett and M. Valls to consider what machinery might be appropriate.

(*b*) *Examination of ways to increase the effectiveness of the US economic aid program*

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[11] André Valls, French economic and financial expert in Indochina.

Mr. Hayes invited M. Letourneau to comment on US efforts to increase the effectiveness of the three States in the extension of services to their respective peoples. M. Letourneau replied that it had been the French experience over the past two and a half years that improvements could only be introduced very slowly. He referred to the undertaking to establish an Ecole d'Administration which began only in October of last year. The Viet-Namese had been anxious to create a school like the Ecole d'Administration in Paris. The French had advised them, however, that for the time being they should concentrate on the immediate goal of training good civil servants quickly. He believed that eventually there would be established three regional schools suited to this purpose like the one which already existed in Dalat. He noted that his government had sent numerous well-trained French civil servants to Viet-Nam who were now working exclusively under Viet-Namese authority. French policy had made considerable progress toward winning the good opinion of the Viet-Namese youth toward a career in the civil service. Some exceptional candidates were now being trained. While considerable administrative progress was being made in the south where a large body of personnel had been trained before the war, they had encountered great difficulty in the north where the administration had been destroyed by Viet Minh.

Mr. Hayes asked whether there was any on-job training program for civil servants. M. Letourneau replied that there was. Mr. Hayes asked what provision there was for training outside of Indochina. M. Letourneau replied that they had given up trying to push this since the students selected for such training tended to refuse to return to their country. The training had to be local. General de Lattre had similarly insisted on this policy for the army.

Mr. Hayes asked whether it was desirable that the US should contribute to this kind of activity. He asked whether the Pau Agreement would constitute a barrier to such participation. M. Letourneau replied that it would not, but he thought that since the Viet-Namese had been accustomed for such a long period of time to French methods of training, it was from the human point of view and from the point of view of language preferable for the French to assume this responsibility. Mr. Hayes said that he wondered whether it might not be fruitful for the US to enter into contracts with French-speaking firms or institutions to expand their curriculum and training facilities. M. Letourneau said that perhaps it might. Mr. Bartlett said that the MSA was considering giving equipment to the medical school in Saigon. He noted that the school of agriculture had not been reactivated and that the MSA had for this reason been unable to give help to it. M. Letourneau said that help in the form of supplies and equipment might be desirable. The University of Hanoi, for example, is suffering from lack of material. The question generally was another instance in which better coordination between France and the US would be fruitful. He suggested further discussion at Saigon. Mr. Hayes asked whether it was only a technical problem of coordination which was required. He asked whether the Pau Agreement did not establish a monopoly excluding MSA activities. M. Letourneau denied that any such monopoly obtained. He said that on all questions discussion was possible. He wished to make clear, however, that it would have unfortunate consequences if the US were to launch projects unilaterally and without previous consultation with the French.

Mr. Hayes asked how M. Letourneau viewed the provision by the US of technical personnel who were already fully trained. He commented that the Pau Agreement had in the past limited the use of US technicians in Indochina. He asked whether this limitation had to continue in the future or whether it would not be possible in special circumstances where no technicians were available from France to draw upon personnel who were not of French nationality. M. Letourneau replied that this was a question of mutual confidence and candid cooperation. He said that the use of French experts was preferable. Where these were lacking, it would be possible to use US technicians. Mr. Hayes said that it might be possible, as had been done in some other countries, for MSA to finance contracts between US firms—as in the case of engineering concerns, for example, and the government of Viet-Nam. Ambassador Heath said that the firms might be Belgian or Swiss.

M. Letourneau then raised certain questions concerning MSA financial policy in Indochina:

1. Credits for tobacco imports had been available in 1951–2, but had subsequently been withdrawn. This was unfortunate. Indochina was a regular customer for United States' tobacco. In 1949 imports had amounted to 961 tons and in 1951 they had amounted to 1,055 tons. Tobacco was of great importance to local budgets, yielding in 1952 some 20,000,000 piasters in revenue on imports and 400,000,000 on "regie" sales.
2. The U.S. have refused to accept French proposals in the past to finance imports of raw silk on the grounds that it was a deluxe item. He wished to point out that this was not the case in the Indochinese States. Silk was used for clothing in the villages, and the processing of this silk was an important village industry in which large numbers of people were now unemployed because of the dearth of raw silk.
3. He expressed the hope that sugar imports from Cuba, the Philippines or Formosa might be financed by MSA. He estimated that Viet-Nam needs amounted to about $1½ million.

Mr. Hayes said that it might be possible to make some administrative assistance on the basis of the probable response of Congress to a proposal regarding tobacco and raw silk. In the case of sugar, however, MSA was clearly prevented from a change in policy so long as a

Puerto Rican surplus persisted. However, Puerto Rican sugar might be financed.

Mr. Hayes asked for M. Letourneau's views on the Tonkin pacification program, such as Dong Quan. M. Letourneau replied that both French administrators and Viet-Namese authorities appeared to be pleased with this program. He said that Premier Tam was at first dubious. He thought that the people would not consent to move to the new villages. His doubt, however, had proved to be unfounded. It was clear to M. Letourneau that it would be impossible to pacify large areas in which the population was dispersed among a large number of very small villages. He believed that additional aid for new villages next year would be valuable. Mr. Hayes asked whether this program was not sufficiently successful to warrant careful consideration of the possibility of financing in the future a large number of these villages, possibly 50. M. Letourneau said he thought this possibility should be considered and that the enlarged village programs should be given a high priority.

Mr. Hayes asked what possibilities there were of increasing the local production of para-military items. M. Letourneau said that he believed Bao Dai and his government would not favor this although Ex-Minister of Defense Tri had been anxious to start such production. It was M. Letourneau's personal opinion, however, that a program to achieve this would be useful. It was apparent that the Viet Minh had found such activity feasible and useful. If they can make hand grenades, he saw no reason why the same thing might not be accomplished on our side. He would give a considered reply to Mr. Hayes' question after he had had consultation with his national defense colleagues in Paris.

Mr. Hayes asked M. Letourneau to what extent it was possible and desirable for the US to support the reform program of Premier Tam. M. Letourneau replied that this program was a desirable one, but that only that part of it concerned with agricultural reform could be helped financially. It might be worthwhile to provide dollars for tenant farmers to buy land. Ambassador Heath said that MSA could not provide money for them to buy land but could only offer short term credit to enable them to operate their land. Mr. Hayes observed that MSA had given technical help in conducting cadastral surveys in the Philippines. He said that he believed that it was most important for the US and the French to give moral support to this program and possibly some kind of leverage to put the program into effect. M. Letourneau said that he thought that Premier Tam knew that he had warm French and US support.

Dr. Kenny said that he was particularly concerned with the question of local manufacture of para-military supplies. He said that M. Letourneau had already commented on this question. Dr. Kenny wished to state, however, that he would be most interested to hear of M. Letourneau's decisions on this matter after his consultations in Paris.

(*c*) *Possible increased contributions to effectiveness of Associated States governments in technical fields*

Mr. Bonsal said that he thought that enough had been said on this subject in the foregoing discussion. He would only observe that French accomplishments in educating and training the peoples of Indochina to assume their new responsibilities would be the most important element in solving the problems of these countries. He wished to reassure M. Letourneau that the US had no intention of pressing these governments and the French administration to accept the service of a large number of US technicians and experts. We had no desire to multiply demands upon our pool of experts who were already in short supply. M. Letourneau replied that he accepted Mr. Bonsal's assurances and agreed that the surest basis for progress in Indochina was a good partnership between France and Viet Nam.

In concluding the meeting, Mr. Bonsal said that he wished to thank M. Letourneau for his kindness and his cooperative attitude throughout these talks. The American participants had found the discussions most rewarding in the agreement and understanding achieved. M. Letourneau thanked Mr. Bonsal for his remarks and expressed his gratitude for a cordial reception in Washington. He had enjoyed making new friendships and renewing old ones. He had found the exchange of views stimulating and fruitful, and he was leaving Washington with fresh confidence in the cooperation of France and the United States.

751G.00/3–3153

Memorandum by Ambassador Donald R. Heath to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 31, 1953.

Subject: Attached Memorandum

Mr. Frank Nash, Assistant Secretary of Defense, has asked me to submit for the use of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, my opinion, herewith attached, on the political effects and feasibility of the strategic operations plan for Indochina outlined by M. Letourneau, French Minister for the Associated States, in his conferences at the Pentagon. It is understood that Brigadier General Trapnell, Chief of MAAG, Indochina, is to prepare a military appreciation of the plan.[1]

If you approve, I recommend the attached opinion be passed to Mr. Nash, for further transmittal to the JCS.[2]

[Annex]

Memorandum by Ambassador Donald R. Heath

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, March 31, 1953.]

The French plan of operations, explained by Minister Letourneau at the Pentagon, is designed to accomplish decisive military defeat of the Viet Minh forces by early 1955. The plan envisages doubling the present strength of the Vietnamese National Army and gradually entrusting to it autonomous military responsibilities in operations and in occupying and controlling areas now controlled in whole, or in part, by the Viet Minh forces. If successful, this plan should also progressively strengthen the political position of the Bao Dai government. It would be still better for the political situation if the time-table of military expansion and operations could be accelerated, but the French insist that this is not practicable.

The plan, for example, contemplates that final operations to clean out the South will be accomplished not by French forces, but by the Vietnamese national army, under direct command of Vietnamese officers and that these purely Vietnamese units will remain for the military occupation of the region.

Up to the present time, the Viet Minh propaganda machine has made great capital out of the fact that it is French troops or French commanded Vietnamese units who are doing the fighting and occupying Vietnamese territory for the alleged purpose of restoring colonial control. This propaganda advantage should be lost when the Vietnamese troops finally conquer and control the important southern region with the French out of the picture.

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[1] *Infra.*

[2] The following handwritten notations appear in order on the source text:

"Don: This seems fine to me. I'm asking Walter to look it over too as he heard Letourneau's presentation and I did not. J[ohn] M. A[llison]"

"Don—I did not realize that Letourneau predicted *decisive defeat* by 1955, but rather that proposed plan should put Vietnamese–French forces in military command of situation. However, you know so well French views, I probably misunderstood—W[alter] S. R[obertson]"

"Mr. Bonsal, Mr. Letourneau said his plan contemplates reduction of Viet Minh resistance to negligible proportions by early 1955. I accordingly think my phrase 'decisive defeat' might stand. D[onald] R. H[eath]"

"I agree. P[hilip] W. B[onsal]"

On Apr. 3, Assistant Secretary of State Allison transmitted a copy of Ambassador Heath's memorandum to Assistant Secretary of Defense Nash. Allison's letter of transmittal read as follows: "Attached is a memorandum prepared by Ambassador Heath, in accordance with your request, giving the Ambassador's views as to the political effects and feasibility of the strategic operations plan of concept for Indochina outlined to us by M. Letourneau. We are in general agreement with the Ambassador's views. We are working on a more detailed analysis of the French plan and will let you have our thinking on this subject at an early date." (751G.5/4–353)

The South is the most productive part of Viet-Nam and, when finally cleared of the Viet Minh should produce large rice exports with increased tax revenues which should increase the prestige and capabilities of the Vietnamese administration.

Under the French plan, the Vietnamese national army will also occupy the populous northern delta, but will be unable to do this without French military assistance or before another eighteen months. When the national army is able unaided to occupy and control the northern delta, Vietnamese Governmental prestige and authority should be still further enhanced.

Under the Letourneau plan, the Vietnamese Army will be increased by the Spring of 1955 to some 300,000 men as compared with a French Union expeditionary force of around 150,000. This disproportion of forces should allay present fears entertained by certain Vietnamese Nationalists and fanned by Viet Minh propaganda that after defeating the Viet Minh the French expeditionary force will try to resume military control of Viet-Nam.

It is my considered view that the Franco-Vietnamese program of expansion of the Vietnamese National Army and progressive increase of its independent military responsibilities is politically feasible and desirable.

751G.00/3-3153

Memorandum by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina (Trapnell)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] 31 March 1953.

Subject: French Plan for Ending the War in Indo-China.

To: Major General G. C. Stewart
Director, Office of Military Assistance
Office Secretary of Defense

1. As requested by you, the following are my comments on the French Plan for Indo-China.

2. In broad terms, the plan contemplates the successive clean-up from south to north of the Viet Minh forces by the regular French and Vietnamese units. These areas will be garrisoned by newly orga-

nized Vietnamese commando battalions thereby releasing French and Vietnamese regular units for operations in the north. The plan contemplates the assembly of sufficient regular forces in the Delta area during the winter of 1954 and 1955 to initiate a conclusive campaign against the Viet Minh Battle Corps.

3. The plan indicates a force build-up as follows:

FY 1953—An increase of 40,000 personnel in the Vietnamese ground forces, 650 in the Laos forces and 2,000 in the Cambodian forces.

FY 1954—A force increase in Vietnamese of 45,000, initiation of an air force program, an augmentation of Vietnamese navy, and an increase of 7,500 ground forces for Laos and Cambodia. An additional increase of 12,000 under the Hinh Plan.

FY 1955—Increase of 20,000 personnel for the Vietnamese army.

4. French representatives indicated that they expect the United States to bear the entire costs of the equipment for the above listed forces. They further indicated that over and above the cost of equipment there would be a deficit of 81 billion francs for the support of these forces in FY 1954 and again in FY 1955.

5. My reaction to the above plan is one of disappointment at the time required to reach a decisive stage in the operations. I am convinced the French are too conservative and overly cautious in their concept of operations. It would appear that more effort could be concentrated earlier in the north where the main Viet Minh threat exists. Cutting the Chinese supply lines should receive a high priority. However, after many discussions with the French High Command in Indo-China, I believe that they will resist any outside pressure to force them to modify their proposed plans. The plan otherwise appears to be sound and barring unforeseen developments, such as the implementation of Chinese forces, will probably succeed.

6. It would not appear that the oft repeated French fear of a Viet Minh push through Laos to Thailand and Burma is based on a sound appreciation of the situation such a move would develop. The Viet Minh flank and long supply lines would be completely exposed to attack by the Franco-Vietnamese forces from the Tonkin area. The country is rugged and transportation extremely difficult. Meager food supplies exist throughout that area. Such a move might achieve a political advantage but militarily would be of little value.

7. While this plan is slow and expensive, the other course of action is to accept a stalemate which is also not only expensive but in the long run favors the Viet Minh and offers no solution.

T. J. H. Trapnell
Brig General, USA

751G.00/4–453

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chargé at Saigon (McClintock)[1]

CONFIDENTIAL [SAIGON,] April 2, 1953.

Persons present: The Honorable Adlai E. Stevenson[2]
Mr. Barry Bingham
Mr. William Blair
Mr. Robert McClintock
His Majesty Bao Dai
Mr. Nguyen Duy Quang, Secretary General, Foreign Office
Mr. Nguyen De, Minister of State, Chief of Imperial Cabinet

During the course of a long and rambling conversation Bao Dai gave Mr. Stevenson his own version of the development of Ho chi Minh and the Viet Minh revolutionary movement.

The Chief of State said that Ho chi Minh had emerged shortly after the first world war as a popular Nationalist leader in Indochina. His activities attracted the attention of French Communists and, when Ho chi Minh was a student in France he was selected by the French Communists for advance study in Moscow. It was only after his sojourn at the Lenin School and his eventual return to Canton in 1925 that he became to be more known as a Communist than as a simple Nationalist leader.

According to Bao Dai, Ho chi Minh was imprisoned by the British authorities in Hong Kong in 1925. At this time the French colonial government in Indochina requested the Hong Kong authorities to release Ho chi Minh in order that he might "be used against Japanese imperialism" (*sic*). Ho proceeded to Singapore where for a time he was a member of the British intelligence service. From Singapore he moved into Siam which thenceforth remained his seat of operations. It was from the Siamese vantage point that Ho organized the Viet Minh party which soon proved itself to be the most virile and effective of the various clandestine Indochinese parties. Ho eventually emerged, after the Japanese defeat in 1945, as the strongest Nationalist leader of Indochina. He was recognized as such by the authorities in French Indochina, particularly because the metropolitan government in France, whose Deputy Premier at this time was Maurice

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[1] This memorandum was transmitted to Washington in despatch 421, Apr. 4. (751G.00/4–453) Copies were also sent to Paris and Hanoi. The conversation recorded here took place at the retreat of Bao Dai at Banmethout.

[2] Governor Stevenson, Governor of Illinois, 1949–1953, and Democratic Party candidate for President in 1952, was on a visit in Indochina.

Thorez,[3] looked with favor upon the activities of Ho chi Minh. It was due to Communist domination of French policy in 1945 that it was possible for Ho to become the Prime Minister of Vietnam.

It was at this time that Bao Dai abdicated and spent a period of five months as a Political Advisor to Ho chi Minh. Bao Dai said he was also elected in early 1946 as a Deputy in the National Assembly of the Viet Minh Government. In August of 1946 he was sent on a private mission to make contact with Chiang Kai Shek,[4] seeking Nationalist Chinese recognition of the Viet Minh regime in Hanoi.

Bao Dai said that Ho's popular appeal rapidly commenced to dwindle as the Vietnamese realized that he was more a Communist at heart than a true Nationalist. Bao Dai made the somewhat mystifying explanation that one of the prime motives of the December 1946 massacre in Hanoi was to establish Ho in the popular imagination as an inveterate enemy of the French and thus to canalize Nationalist feeling throughout the country in support of the Viet Minh movement.

Bao Dai said that with subsequent developments Ho chi Minh was now not an important figure and it made little practical difference whether he were alive or dead. The Chief of State repeated the current rumors that Ho chi Minh is in fact possibly no longer living. He stressed, however, that real control of affairs in the Viet Minh Government lies in the hands of the Supreme Military Commander, Giap, and in the Chinese Communist military advisors who are on his staff.

Mr. Stevenson repeatedly sought to ascertain from Bao Dai what motives sustained the Viet Minh in their fanatic warfare against the French and Vietnamese.

The oily assurances of Ambassador Quang (a professional courtier who, despite the fact that he was recently Foreign Minister of Viet Minh, is now the Secretary General of the Vietnam Foreign Office) that throughout the length and breadth of Vietnam Bao Dai is revered as the Father of his people did not carry great conviction. Similarly the Americans were not impressed by Bao Dai's insistence that everyone in Viet Minh-occupied zones does what he does because he is forced to at bayonet point. Bao Dai's thesis was, however, that the downtrodden peasantry of Viet Minh are groaning under a heavy yoke; that they suffer from forced requisitioning, particularly rice, and are the pawns of an elaborate system of corvée. He cited the ability of the Viet Minh armed forces to round up bands of as many as 20,000 coolies to maintain the LOC between main bases and advanced outposts. When asked why the Viet Minh soldiers fought so well, Bao Dai said that the army was treated as a corps d'élite; soldiers were well fed and paid, and in consequence their loyalty to the regime was greater than that of the great mass of the populace.

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[3] Secretary-General of the French Communist Party.

[4] President of the Republic of China.

Turning to the Vietnam side of the picture, Bao Dai, in response to Governor Stevenson's question as to the possibilities of elections for a National Assembly, at first said that this was fairly useless since half of his country was in enemy hands. He later said that of course eventually a National Assembly would come, but he clearly showed no great enthusiasm for the prospect.

The Chief of State dwelt at some length on the fact that the Vietnamese armed forces are not in control of their own destinies. However, he failed signally to respond to the suggestion that possibly higher morale would result if he personally would assume command of the Vietnamese armed forces.

The former Emperor went over ground previously traced in Saigon, discussing the proposed recruitment of 54 commando battalions in 1953 and the increase of military effectives for Vietnam. He said that of course all of this would cost money and that in turn would depend upon French aid. At no time did Bao Dai seem cognizant of the fact that one-third of the equipment being brought into his country for prosecution of the war is of American origin. In fact, so obvious was his omission to so much as mention American aid that his Minister of the Imperial Cabinet, Nguyen De, launched into a somewhat tipsy panegyric, extolling the American virtues in a mixture of Oriental hyperbole and French cafe oratory.

The Emperor mentioned his physical disabilities which included liver parasites as a result of amebiasis. It seemed clear that his eyes were fixed in glistening anticipation on the south of France. It was later learned from the *Chef de Cabinet Civil* that he will probably fly in his private Liberator for Cannes approximately April 10.

751G.5/4–353

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 3, 1953.

Subject: Status of Indochina Problem

In the course of the Mayer talks full recognition of the interdependence of the fight in Korea and in Indochina was expressed. The French reasserted their resolve to pursue hostilities in Indochina with a view to "achieving success". We stated our willingness to study French plans "so as to determine how and to what extent the U.S. may be able to contribute matériel and financial support to their achievement".

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[1] This memorandum was drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs. A handwritten notation on the source text by Roderic L. O'Connor, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, indicates that the paper was seen by the Secretary on Apr. 7.

Allison was appointed Ambassador to Japan on Apr. 2. He was succeeded as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs by Walter S. Robertson on Apr. 8.

The two governments also stated that in their view, should there be an armistice in Korea and "should the Chinese Communist regime take advantage of such an armistice to pursue aggressive war elsewhere in the Far East, such action would have the most serious consequences for the effort to bring about peace in the world and would conflict directly with the understanding on which any armistice in Korea would rest".

M. Letourneau remained in Washington for two days after the departure of M. Mayer. M. Letourneau described to Defense, State and DMS officials the general Franco-Vietnamese strategic concept looking to the substantial defeat of the enemy in Indochina. *M. Letourneau stressed in the most energetic terms the top secret nature of the plans and other data which he furnished.*

Stated very briefly, the strategic concept involves over the next two years the training, arming, and equipping of 135,000 additional Vietnamese troops. These, organized in light battalions and officered entirely by Vietnamese, will be used in conjunction with Franco-Vietnamese units to clear up enemy centers of resistance in the south and central portions of Viet-Nam, thus releasing heavily armed Franco-Vietnamese regular units for service against the bulk of the regular organized enemy forces in the north. It is estimated that these latter forces will be brought to a decisive final battle during the first half of 1955.

The French estimate of the additional cost of raising and maintaining the additional Vietnamese troops needed for this strategic plan is, for calendar 1954 in the neighborhood of $233 million for pay, maintenance, food, clothing, matériel, etc., and $81 million for additional end-items from the U.S. For calendar 1955 the French estimate the additional cost at over $300 million for pay, maintenance, food, etc., and some $10 million for additional end-items from the U.S. (The present cost to the French and ourselves of the war in Indochina is estimated at well over $1.5 billion.)

The JCS have been requested by the Secretary of Defense to prepare a military evaluation of the French plan. It is expected that this will be ready on April 8. Meanwhile General Trapnell, Chief of MAAG/Saigon, although disappointed at the slowness and expense of the plan sees no alternative to its acceptance. Ambassador Heath has expressed a considered view that the program of expanding the Vietnamese national army as well as the military responsibilities of the Vietnamese Government is politically feasible and desirable. He has also endorsed other features of the plan.

So far as cost is concerned, it is believed that the French preliminary submissions should be and will be carefully screened and that there will be careful examination of the possibility of increasing the financial share of the war effort borne by the people of Viet-Nam.

751G.5/4-753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 7, 1953—6 p. m.

1967. During French talks Washington March 27–31, Letourneau outlined strategic concept military operations Indochina looking toward substantial defeat of organized enemy forces by first half 1955. Basis is augmentation National Armies Associated States during calendar years 53–55 so as to relieve French Union and Vietnamese regulars now tied down in static defense duties and increase mobile reserves for offensive operations against enemy regular forces in North. Details will be pouched. Brief résumé follows:

Calendar year '53: No change over 40,000 man increase already announced. End items from presently programmed FY 53 MDAP.

Calendar year '54: Additional 57,000 Viet-Nam; Cambodia–Laos 6,650. Additional end item equipment from US above regular program estimated cost $81 million. French and Associated States fiscal contribution at same rate calendar '53 would leave deficit approximately $231 million.

Calendar year '55: Viet-Nam 23,000; Cambodia–Laos 2,000. Equipment from US at cost $10 million. Fiscal deficit approximately $299.3 million.

All above in addition "regular" eight division program for Viet-Nam and comparable Cambodian-Laos programs. No formal request that US assume deficits for '54 and '55 but French intent clear that is their plan. Program will be studied further by Department and Defense.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA, and Robert E. Hoey, Officer in Charge of Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs. Also sent to Paris as telegram 5133 and to London by pouch.

751G.00/4–953

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Matthews)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 9, 1953.

Subject: Description of French Plan for military operations in Indochina as recently presented by M. Letourneau, Minister for Associated States, and recommendations regarding U.S. Government consideration of that plan.

The Background

During his recent stay in Washington, M. Jean Letourneau, Minister for Associated States in the French Government, and General Allard, Chief of Staff of the French Expeditionary Corps in Indochina, outlined for the benefit of the Departments of Defense and State and of DMS a broad strategic plan or concept designed to accomplish the substantial military defeat of organized enemy forces in Indochina by the first half of 1955. M. Letourneau gave military and operational data and furnished an estimate of the added cost over present levels of expenditures in calendar 1953, 1954 and 1955 if the plan is to be implemented. The plan is currently being evaluated in Defense from a military point of view. The Joint Chiefs are scheduled to give their opinion on April 15.[2] This memorandum sets forth the essential elements of the plan and makes recommendations as to further handling in the Department of State, including coordination with Defense and DMS and integration with the consideration of the French aid problem as a whole.

(*a*) *The Military Concept*

The Letourneau plan involves a program for military operations predicated upon the creation of substantial additional native forces. The assumptions upon which the plan is drawn up are the following:

(1) That the enemy will remain at about his present strength and equipment levels.

(2) That there will be no overt Chinese Communist aggression.

(3) That the Vietnamese Government will in fact have the resources and the drive needed to carry out successfully its share of heavy recruiting, training and operational responsibilities in accordance with timetable of plan.

(4) That forces from the French Union outside of Indochina (i.e., Metropolitan French, North Africans, Senegalese and Foreign Legion) will remain in 1954 and 1955 at 1953 levels, i.e., there will be no significant increase or decrease in these forces.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.

[2] See the enclosure to the memorandum by Halaby, Apr. 24, p. 493.

The plan recognizes that the weakness of the present situation from the Franco-Vietnamese point of view is the lack of mobile combat-worthy reserves in the Tonkin area which would permit the French High Command to assume and hold the initiative against the organized enemy divisions in that main area of enemy strength. In order to provide, directly and indirectly, the needed additional offensive power for our side, it is planned not only to continue the current project to create a Vietnamese National Army of eight divisions (there are six divisions, more or less, currently available), but also to raise large numbers of additional national forces organized generally into light "commando" battalions.

It is hoped to raise 54 of these light battalions or 40,000 men in 1953, 45,000 men in 1954 and 20,000 in 1955. In addition, there would be raised in 1954 supporting units numbering perhaps 12,000 (heavier units and communications units) plus in 1955 an additional 3,000. (Small increases in the forces of Laos and Cambodia are also contemplated.)

According to the Manning table included under Tab A attached,[3] the effect of the plan including the existing program for the expansion of the regular army, would be to increase the forces available for the Franco-Vietnamese war effort from 422,230 men on January 1, 1953 to 581,700 when 1955 increments have been activated. This is an increase of 159,470 men (variations in figures from different sources are often encountered).

The new Vietnamese light battalions and supporting forces would, it is contemplated, be completely officered by Vietnamese. They would be raised and used on a strictly regional basis. Concurrently, the Vietnamese General Staff would assume increasing responsibilities for territorial military security by taking over such responsibilities from the French High Command.

In broad terms, the operational plan contemplates the successive cleanup from south to center to north of the Viet Minh forces by French Union troops including the Vietnamese regular units and the new lighter levies described above, with the latter playing an important role in the military operations and then assuming responsibility for territorial security in the liberated territories.

These cleanup operations (to be carried out in Cochin China between May 1953 and early 1954, and in Annam during the first half of 1954) would enable French expeditionary corps and Vietnamese regular units now pinned down in static defense tasks and in the protection of roads, bridges, communications and utilities to be progressively released for the build-up of forces and for operations in the north against the major Viet Minh regular units. It is believed that for the anticipated "final battle", to begin in late 1954 or early 1955, the mobile striking force at the disposition of the French High Command could be increased from its present level of the equivalent of seven or eight regimental combat teams to some twenty regimental combat teams.

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[3] Not printed.

The French High Command hopes to bring the enemy to accept this final battle (or to accept being driven to barren hill regions where he could not survive as an effective force) by attacking him with great strength in the rich Than Hoa–Vinh area just south of the Tonkin Delta. It is particularly upon this area that the enemy relies for food and for recruits and as a secure base for his forays into the southern delta. Its loss would be of great importance to him and it is the firm belief of the French High Command that he could be brought to a destructive and final battle if his control there were threatened.

The plan, so far as the raising of additional manpower is concerned, is not a purely French product. It represents agreement with Bao Dai and General Hinh, the Vietnamese Chief of Staff, at a meeting of the Franco-Vietnamese Defense Commission on February 24. We are advised, however, that General Alessandri, a French general who is Bao Dai's military adviser, considers the plan to be inadequate and has recommended that the number of new troops to be raised in 1954 be at least 100 instead of 54 battalions.

(b) The Price Tag

The attached table (Tab B)[4] gives for calendar 1953, 1954 and 1955 the French estimates of budgetary requirements for the Associated States national military forces (excluding the value of U.S. end-item aid programs present and future). The total expenditures expressed in billions of francs with dollar equivalents are as follows:

Calendar Year	*Billions of Francs*	*Millions of Dollars*
1953	144.9	414
1954	226.1	647
1955	250.1	714.7

These figures cover pay and allowances, food and maintenance, medical supplies, clothing and bedding, matériel and infrastructure. They are additional to the roughly one billion dollars per year budgeted for the French expeditionary corps.

For calendar year 1953, French and Vietnamese resources are apparently in sight (on the basis of current U.S. budget support aid) to cover all but 10 billion francs or $28.7 million which is included in the French budget as counterpart of a part of the $125 million in additional aid anticipated from the U.S. during FY 1953 but not yet received. (*This item of 10 billion francs or $28.7 million is included in the level of resources estimated by the French for calendar year 1954*

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[4] Not printed.

and 1955; if this amount is not made available by the U.S. in the form of budget support aid in 1953, 1954 and 1955, requirements of aid from sources not now calculated by the French will have to be increased correspondingly.)

For calendar year 1954, the French compute U.S. FY 1954 aid at present levels plus the $28.7 million referred to immediately above and they anticipate no possible increase in French resources available. They thus arrive at a "deficit" of 81.2 billion francs or $233 million which they expect us to supply.

Similarly, a deficit below resources presently in sight of some 105.2 billion francs or $300.7 million is indicated for calendar 1955 but nothing is said as to the added burden which French and Vietnamese sources might reasonably be expected to assume.

It is to be noted that the additional budget support aid which the French are requesting is for items which we have not heretofore financed and also that most of these items consist of piastre expenditures.

So far as end-items are concerned, additional requirements from the U.S. above the FY 1953 level of some $290 million (including $30 million in common use items) are computed for calendar 1953 at $19.3 million from MDAP. The French have already been told by Defense that end-items covered by this sum will be made available and the requirements are being urgently processed by MAAG Saigon.

For calendar 1954, additional end-items needed from the U.S. MDAP for the French plan are valued at $81 million (in excess of MDAP estimates of about $465 million) and for 1955 at some $10 million.

In summary, therefore, the additional aid (entirely from U.S. sources in 1953 and 1954 at least) estimated by the French for the execution of the Letourneau plan may be tabulated as follows (all amounts in millions of dollars):

	Calendar 1953	*Calendar 1954*	*Calendar 1955*	*Total*
Additional U.S. Aid "Promised"	$28. 7	$28. 7	$28. 7	$86. 1
New Budget-support Aid	—	233. 0	300. 7	533. 7
Additional End-item (MDAP)	19. 3	81. 0	10. 0	110. 3
Total Additional	$48. 0	$342. 7	$339. 4	$730. 1

(*Note*—U.S. Budget support aid to the French budget as a whole for FY 1953 is $525 million.)

The above plan or concept was at first considered by Defense to be (1) too slow and (2) to be defective in that it deferred any major military effort to reach conclusions in the north, which is the most critical and important theater of operations, until the conclusion of cleanup operations in the south and center. The President expressed to the French Ministers the hope that they might find it possible to accelerate the carrying out of the plan. Nevertheless the French Ministers and General Allard insisted strongly that their timetable was realistic and not susceptible of improvement except on the basis of unpredictable favorable circumstances. Mayer and Letourneau suggested to the President, who agreed, the sending of two U.S. officers to Indochina for the purpose of discussing the plan with the French Command and seeking some acceleration. The question of whether to send such a mission was not further mentioned in the Letourneau or later talks.

The plan has been submitted for evaluation by the Secretary of Defense to the Joint Chiefs of Staff whose opinion is expected to be expressed on April 15th. General Trapnell, Chief of MAAG Saigon, has prepared a memorandum of comments, a copy of which is attached as Tab C.[5] General Trapnell reaches the conclusion that the plan, while "slow and expensive" offers the only solution currently available to us.

At the request of Mr. Frank Nash, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Ambassador Heath submitted a memorandum to be forwarded by Mr. Nash to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the political effects and feasibility of the plan. A copy of this memorandum is attached as Tab D.[6] Ambassador Heath's conclusion is favorable as to the political feasibility and desirability of the program for the expansion of the Vietnamese national army. He also expresses a favorable opinion of the other features of the plan.

Discussion

While the military features of the plan must be evaluated in the Pentagon, it seems clear that there is very little likelihood that the French will develop or accept any accelerated strategic concept for the defeat of the Viet Minh. Indeed the carrying out of the present plan will depend very much on the character, energy and aggressiveness of the Franco-Vietnamese military leadership. Nor does it appear that the French would concur that a strategy or concept providing for a lesser build-up of Vietnamese forces than that included in the present plan would produce the results desired. On the basis of present indications, an increase over present plans may well be submitted to us.

So far as the cost of the plan is concerned, particularly for calendar 1954, the French themselves do not contemplate any additional contribution from their own resources above the level of such contributions in calendar 1953. They count upon a maintenance of our contribution at present levels (including $28.7 million from the "promised" $125 million) and upon an increment from us of $233 million in budget-supporting assistance and $81 million in end-items. Therefore, any reduction in the price tag upon which the French have based the Franco-Vietnamese effort in calendar 1954 would necessarily be derived from (*a*) a possible reduction in the total cost as a result of Franco-American screening of proposed expenditures, (*b*) a greater Vietnamese contribution to the war effort, or (*c*) possible economies resulting from a modification of the piastre-franc rate.

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[5] For the memorandum by General Trapnell, Mar. 31, see p. 451.

[6] For the memorandum by Ambassador Heath, Mar. 31, see p. 449.

Since most of the items for which U.S. budget-support aid is required represent piastre expenditures, special attention will have to be given to the methods and procedures for transforming U.S. dollar assistance into piastre availabilities in Viet-Nam. Also, since the expenditures in question consist of items handled through the Vietnamese budget, some study should be given to the problem of whether U.S. aid should be administered through the French as at present or whether direct bilateral arrangements should be entered into with the Vietnamese Government. The solution adopted will probably depend upon the ways and means devised for going from dollar appropriations to piastre budget support. (If, as seems likely, this will involve finding additional items to finance in the French military budget, thus releasing francs with which to swell the French contribution to the Vietnamese budget, no direct U.S. Vietnamese arrangements would be necessary even though there might be a favorable balance of political advantages over disadvantages in any such arrangements.)

From the point of view of maximum political desirability the plan possesses obvious drawbacks. For one thing, it contemplates that large organized enemy forces with all their political prestige both in Indochina and in the Communist world will remain more or less intact until early in 1955. For another, since the plan depends for its success upon a great increase in the number of Vietnamese under arms, it involves a transfer to the Vietnamese Government of an increasing share in decisions as to how and whether hostilities are to be pursued or terminated; this is dangerous to the extent that divergencies as to the significance of the struggle and the conditions for its termination may develop between the French and the Vietnamese. Recent developments in Soviet and in Chinese Communist policy accentuate the risks inherent in this aspect of the situation. The plan also, as indicated above, places great reliance on the comparatively untried capacity of the Vietnamese Government to raise, train and handle comparatively large levies of men on a fairly tight schedule.

Nevertheless, if it is taken as a firm decision that no more than the approximately 130,000 men now in Viet-Nam from outside the area are to be made available from the French Union or from other free world sources, there seems no possibility of curing the above stated potential political disadvantages by making an earlier attempt to liquidate the main enemy forces. Our side simply does not have the necessary forces to move now.

Recommendations

In view of the above discussion, the following recommendations as to general lines of procedure are submitted:

1) That if Defense finds the French concept militarily acceptable, the Department support it from the political point of view.

2) That early arrangements be made for a thorough screening of stated French requirements for both budget-support and end-item aid. (Responsibility of State and Embassies, MAAG/Saigon, DMS, Defense (OMA))

3) That recommendations be formulated as to methods and procedures for rendering budget-support aid in the amounts probably required. (Responsibility of S/MSA, FE, DMS)

4) That an early top level decision be secured, in the light of the screened requirements and of the methods devised for making aid available, to the effect that the necessary authorizations, appropriations and, if necessary, legislative authority, will be requested from Congress.

5) That we be prepared for further discussions with the French in Paris prior to the NATO Annual Review meetings with the particular aim of further clarifying the cost of French military programs in both Europe and Indochina.

6) That an early meeting be called by Mr. Matthews with representatives of Defense (Mr. Nash, General Stewart), DMS (Mr. Ohly[7] and Mr. Paul), and State (Mr. Matthews, Ambassador Heath, Mr. MacArthur, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Merchant, Mr. Martin, Mr. Knight, Mr. Parelman,[8] Mr. Bonsal among others) for the purpose of canvassing the situation, achieving an understanding as to agency responsibilities and establishing a timetable.

Note—The Department has already asked Embassy Saigon to initiate a study of added revenues which might accrue to the Vietnamese Government if defense expenditures on the scale contemplated by Letourneau plan take place in calendar 1954.

Draft copies of this memorandum were circulated on April 3 to: Ambassador Heath, Messrs. MacArthur, Nolting,[9] Nitze, Allison, Knight, Beigel and Parelman. Such comments as have been received have been taken into account in this final draft.

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[7] John H. Ohly, Deputy to the Director for Program and Coordination, Mutual Security Agency.

[8] Samuel T. Parelman, Special Assistant for Regional Programs, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State.

[9] Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary of State.

751G.5/4-1353 : Despatch

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, April 13, 1953.

No. 441

Subject: Conversation between Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army in the Pacific and French Senior Military Officers.

On April 4 the reporting officer attended a dinner tendered by Col. Emons B. Whisner, Acting Chief of the United States Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), in honor of Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army in the Pacific, who had come from his headquarters at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, to Indochina for a visit of several days to discuss military matters. Other persons present at the dinner were Gen. Salan, Commander-in-Chief of the French Union Forces in Indochina; Gen. Bondis, Commander of the French Union Forces in South Vietnam; Admiral Auboyneau, Commander-in-Chief of the French Naval Forces, Far East; Col. Lucas, French Liaison Officer assigned to MAAG; and Col. Moore of Joint Staff CINCPAC. Following dinner Gen. O'Daniel discussed with his French colleagues several aspects of the war in Indochina.

Gen. O'Daniel appeared to be most interested in the question of maintaining security in areas from which the Viet Minh had been swept by Franco-Vietnamese military operations. He questioned Generals Salan and Bondis closely regarding the reason why, after an area had been presumably cleared of the enemy, the security of such an area could not be entrusted to "the police" and regular troops relieved from security duties. The French Generals explained that the nature of the warfare in Indochina was such that the enemy was able to blend in with the local population and exact from them by terrorism a large measure of cooperation. In the face of superior forces the enemy faded away only to return when such forces were no longer present. Consequently the presence of troops was necessary to ensure security. The Vietnamese security organizations were not yet competent to deal with this problem. Gen. O'Daniel returned several times to this question. He seemed not to be convinced completely by the explanations given to him and several times rephrased his questions, as if to make sure that he had made himself clear to the French generals. He cited American experience in Korea; he suggested that by starting in the South and progressively clearing areas as Franco-Vietnamese forces moved northwards it could be reasonably assumed that all strong enemy elements had been done away with in the area swept over and that the police or Vietnamese militia should be sufficient to take care of any infiltration. The impression derived by the reporting officer was that Gen. O'Daniel was particularly concerned with emphasizing the importance attached by him, and presumably the United States higher command, to the freeing of the maximum number possible of experienced soldiers from police duties for combat and that he was suggesting obliquely the greater utilization of Vietnamese police or second-line troops for security duties. The French replies were in themselves reasonable and presumably accurate so far as they went, but they did seem to gloss over one very important aspect of the matter—the fact that there is a lack of confidence by the French High Command in both the ability and reliability of Vietnamese effectively to insure security. The considerable discussion of the problem of rear-area security appeared to have given Gen. O'Daniel a better appreciation of the type of warfare in Indochina and to have cleared up a number of points regarding the deployment of French and Vietnamese forces on which he appeared to have been hazy. The reporting officer believes, however, that Gen. O'Daniel retained doubts as to the soundness of French pacification tactics and the correctness of the assumptions and reasoning of his French colleagues.

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[1] Copies were transmitted to Paris, Hanoi, and the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Saigon.

In discussing the role to be played by the 54 Vietnamese National Army commando battalions to be created, Col. Whisner inquired whether it was envisaged that these battalions would be lightly armed and equipped and would operate against the Viet Minh in guerrilla fashion, infiltrating Viet Minh zones and in general using offensive tactics similar to those employed by the Viet Minh. Gen. Salan indicated that it was the intention of the French High Command to use the 54 battalions to maintain security in the rear areas, for instance within the Tonkin Delta—offensively in the sense that they would constantly be conducting operations against Viet Minh-held or infiltrated areas, but not against Viet Minh bases outside the Delta. To a question whether it was contemplated that the light battalions would have coolie trains to carry their armament and equipment and thus give them greater mobility, Gen. Salan remarked that Viet Minh prisoners of war were used as pack coolies, and that in effect it had not been found necessary to develop Vietnamese service organizations for packing purposes.

Gen. O'Daniel also had a long discussion regarding the necessity of organizing the Franco-Vietnamese forces into regiments and divisions. He contended that the present battalion organization of the forces in Indochina was essentially a weak organization. To impress the enemy with the strength of the Franco-Vietnamese forces these forces should be used as divisions. The French officers asserted that in larger operations troops were actually used tactically as regimental combat teams and sometimes divisions but countered with arguments regarding the difficulties of organizing their present forces along regimental and divisional lines. The Vietnamese lacked staff officers and could not operate divisional or even regimental staffs. The diversity of types of troops in Indochina—Moroccans, Senegalese, Legionnaires, Vietnamese—precluded the development of regiments. As Gen. Bondis put it, it would be relatively inefficient to have a regiment of Senegalese; he would prefer to have a battalion of Senegalese, a battalion of Legionnaires and a battalion of Moroccans, each being suitable for particular types of operations. The Legionnaires could be relied on when positions had to be held, the Moroccans were better at infiltration, etc.

Gen. O'Daniel urged the more rapid formation of Vietnamese officers, saying that although it might not be possible to turn out quickly Vietnamese majors, colonels and even generals equal to French officers of that grade, it had been found in Korea that youthful Korean commanders of relatively little experience were performing passably in those positions. He stressed that time was of the essence and that it was necessary to make do with the material at hand. If officers now commanding companies were given battalion and even regimental command, he wagered some could probably do a competent job, after a period of field experience with a French advisor. The French explained the difficulty of getting Vietnamese officers. Gen. Salan cited the case of a school being conducted at Hanoi to develop field-grade officers. The Vietnamese had been requested to supply 50 officers. Only 22 had reported to the school. The Vietnamese Army had explained that this was all that could be spared, such was the shortage of officers to man units now in the field. Gen. Salan also mentioned the reluctance of Vietnamese officers to see lateral entry into the army of Vietnamese who by background and education could handle staff or technical functions. The explanations of the French officers made it evident that quite apart from the purely military difficulties entailed in the creation of command and staff officers, there were a multiplicity of cross currents arising from political and psychological factors which have served to hamper direct and dynamic action.

The evening ended on the note, struck by Gen. O'Daniel, that he had come to Indochina to see what he and his headquarters could do to be of assistance. His sharp questions and the arguments presented by him had been in the spirit of friendship and for the purpose of informing himself. He hoped that his French colleagues would not take amiss certain views which he had expressed frankly and vigorously. The French officers appeared to reciprocate the sentiments expressed by Gen. O'Daniel. As the reporting officer was leaving, Col. Whisner remarked to him that he had felt the evening to be very profitable, for seldom had he seen Gen. Salan, who is normally reserved and cautious, become so engrossed in a conversation and express himself so freely.

I believe that Gen. O'Daniel conceives of the war in Indochina largely in terms of the war in Korea. The French on the other hand tend to emphasize the differences between the situation here and in Korea and return to the point time and again that the French Command is not in a position to institute a program on as elaborate and lavish a scale as it appears possible for the United States to do in Korea.

Through the courtesy of the Embassy's Army Attaché, we have seen Gen. O'Daniel's Top Secret telegraphic report to Admiral Radford (OARMA Saigon MC–69–53),[2] which reinforces the opinions described above with a pungency which justifies Gen. O'Daniel's sobriquet of "Iron Mike." Without entering into discussion as to the merits of divisional versus battalion organization to meet the peculiar requirements of the war in Indochina, I do desire to stress that Gen. O'Daniel's suggestion that the new Vietnamese battalions to be called up this year be placed under French commanders will by no means suit the psychological requirements of this war. One of the sore points at issue in the endeavor to recruit 54 new light Vietnamese battalions has been the sensitivity of the relatively untried Vietnamese General Staff to being forever under French tactical and strategical control. The Embassy believes that the pattern so successfully adopted in Korea—of forming ROK divisions with native commanders—should be given a thorough trial in Indochina.

Robert McClintock

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[2] Not printed.

751J.00/4–1553

Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Baker of the Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs

SECRET [Washington,] April 15, 1953.

Subject: Reported Invasion of Laos by Vietminh Forces.

Participants: Ambassador Heath
Mr. Bonsal, PSA
Mr. Hoey, PSA
Mr. McBride, WE
Miss Bacon, FE [1]
Mr. Taylor, UNP [2]
Mr. Stein, UNP [3]
Mr. Baker, UNP

At the request of UNP a meeting was held this morning to discuss problems relating to the reported invasion of Laos by Vietminh Forces and the declaration issued by the Lao Government on April 14 which "solemnly calls to the attention of the United Nations and Free Peoples" the act of foreign interference and requests "formal condemnation of Viet Minh aggression." [4]

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[1] Ruth E. Bacon, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.

[2] Paul B. Taylor, Officer in Charge, General Assembly Affairs.

[3] Eric Stein, Acting Officer in Charge, Pacific Settlement Affairs.

The following conclusions were reached: (1) Inquiry should be made discreetly through the US Mission to the United Nations to determine whether the Laos Government declaration had been brought formally to the attention of the Secretariat; (2) The French Government should be consulted to determine its views with respect to referral of the question to the United Nations without suggesting such referral; (3) The Department of State should have in readiness a statement condemning the Vietminh invasion as further aggressive interference in the affairs of the Associated States of Indochina.

As to the question of possible referral to the United Nations it was agreed that the French attitude on this question should be a major factor in our decision. Mr. McBride reported that the French Embassy has not received any instructions on the Laos declaration. It was recalled that heretofore the French have not favored the "internationalization" of the Indochina situation by reference of the question to the United Nations.

It was agreed that the United Nations could give consideration to the question of Laos apart from the question of Indochina as a whole if that should prove to be politically desirable, inasmuch as the Laos situation represented an invasion by foreign forces not strictly comparable to the activities of the Vietminh within Vietnam even though the Vietminh there received assistance from outside the state. It was pointed out, however, that such a separation of the question of Laos from that of Vietnam would tend to categorize hostilities in Vietnam as a civil war contrary to repeated official statements that it represented aggressive interference by the Chinese Communists in the internal affairs of Vietnam.

In discussing the question of possible forms of UN action it was the consensus that the Security Council would be the appropriate organ to consider the question, and that given US and French support the seven votes required to place the question on the agenda would be forthcoming. In the absence of a rapidly developing military situation an appropriate form of Security Council action would be to seek further information through the Peace Observation Commission or a special fact finding group. Reference was made to the utility of such a commission in the somewhat comparable situation in Greece. In addition to some deterrent effect of the presence of such a commission on foreign assistance to the invaders, Mr. Stein pointed out that the factual data provided by such an investigation might serve as a basis for a Security Council resolution of condemnation of such foreign assistance. The terms of reference of a fact finding body could be restricted to a study of foreign assistance if that should be desirable. If condemnatory action by the Security Council were vetoed such findings of fact, it was pointed out, would tend to increase Asian support for possible action by the General Assembly under the Uniting for Peace resolution.

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[4] A translation of the declaration issued by the Lao Government was transmitted to Washington in telegram 24 from Vientiane, Apr. 14, not printed. (751J.5/4-1453) The original French text was transmitted in despatch 49 of Apr. 20, which also contained the text of a similar appeal which the Government of Laos directed to the United States on Apr. 17. (751J.5/4-2053) The French text of the initial Laotian appeal is printed in *L'Année Politique, 1953*, p. 572.

For a condensed translation of an additional note from the Government of Laos to the United States, delivered on May 4 (Press Release No. 242, May 5), see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 18, 1953, p. 709.

Ambassador Heath favored maximum exploitation of the political and psychological advantages of demonstrating Communist aggression in contrast to peaceful pretensions. Mr. Bonsal expressed doubts that any United Nations action short of a resounding vote for the French position would be useful in such exploitation. Miss Bacon pointed out that the Arab-Asian attitude toward France's policies in Indochina and the Tunis-Morocco situation might be expected to influence the votes of many of those states.

In discussion of Ambassador Heath's suggestion that the Department should issue a strong statement condemning the invasion as aggression, Mr. Stein pointed out the possibility that such a statement might encourage a demand from our domestic opinion or an initiative from some other UN member to refer the question to the United Nations. The connection between the Korean armistice negotiations and any formal condemnation of the invasion as Communist aggression was also pointed out by Miss Bacon and Mr. Stein. Mr. Taylor made the suggestion that to minimize these difficulties any Departmental statement referring to the aggression might place the latest act in the context of the whole problem of Communist interference in Indochina over the past seven years.

751J.5/4–1653

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 16, 1953.

Subject: The Invasion of Laos

Participants: M. Pierre Millet, Counselor, French Embassy
Mr. Bonsal, PSA

M. Millet came in at his request. He referred to the statement issued by the Government of Laos regarding the Viet Minh invasion of that country and stated that this statement had previously been agreed to by the French Government. He referred also to the statement issued on April 15 by the French Government on the same subject.[1]

M. Millet said that it was the opinion of the Government of France, in which the Government of Laos concurs, that the invasion of Laos by the Viet Minh should not at this time be the subject of actual proceedings in the UN. He stated that the French Government saw both advantages and disadvantages to the UN approach and that it would like to give further consideration to the subject in the light of events as they develop. He repeated that the French Government did not consider the Laotian Government statement to constitute a formal appeal calling for UN action.

M. Millet asked me whether we proposed to issue a statement on the subject of the invasion of Laos. I said that we had such a statement under consideration although no final decision had been reached. I described in general terms the draft which had been prepared. M. Millet said that it would be desirable from his point of view if our statement could refer not only to the statement of the Government of Laos but also to that of the French Government. I made no comment on this subject. (It seems to me that in view particularly of the recent Callender story from Paris described below that it would be desirable for our statement to refer merely to that of the Laotian Government; our prepared statement does make reference to the role played by French Union troops in the defense of Laos. We need not emphasize the role of France in the conduct of Laotian foreign policy.)[2]

I took advantage of the opportunity to discuss with Millet the statement allegedly made by French officials in Paris yesterday to Harold Callender of the *New York Times* and to other American newspapermen. Those statements, as carried in the *New York Times* this morning, refer to the alleged lack of legal qualifications of Laos to make an appeal to the UN and also to the alleged fact that the general conduct of Laotian foreign relations was reserved to France in the Accords of 1949. I recall that when the Laotian bid for membership in the UN was being discussed in New York last September, the French made statements which we supported emphasizing the status of Laos as a sovereign member of the French Union with full qualifications for membership in the UN.

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[1] In its statement, the French Government associated itself with the declaration of the Government of Laos regarding the Viet Minh invasion. It called for international solidarity with the efforts of Laos to resist aggression. The text was transmitted to the Department of State in Note No. 242 of Apr. 23. (751J.00/4-2353)

[2] At a news conference of Apr. 17, Michael J. McDermott, Special Assistant for Press Relations, made the following statement:

"The Royal Government of Laos has issued a statement drawing attention to the attack upon the territory of the Kingdom by Viet Minh troops and stating the determination of the Government, the army, and the people of Laos with the aid of French Union troops to resist this aggression.

"The Government of the United States is following developments with the closest attention. It expresses its sympathy with the people of Laos in their present emergency and its fervent wishes to them, to their troops, and to those of the French Union in their efforts to resist and turn back the invaders. The United States will continue to provide and will study ways and means of making more effective its assistance to the Associated States of Indochina and to France in the struggle to destroy Communist aggression in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam." (Department of State *Bulletin*, May 4, 1953, p. 641)

M. Millet was in full agreement regarding the unfortunate and unjustified nature of the statement which had been made to American correspondents in Paris. He said that the Ambassador is in communication with the Quai D'Orsay on the subject.

Editorial Note

On April 16, 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered an address titled "The Chance for Peace" before the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington. The speech, which was broadcast over television and radio, appealed to the leadership of the Soviet Union to show evidence of peaceful purposes, particularly in negotiations on regulation of armaments and on Korea. The President also asked for "an end to the direct and indirect attacks upon the security of Indochina and Malaya," stating that "any armistice in Korea that merely released aggressive armies to attack elsewhere would be a fraud." For the text of the address, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*, pages 179–188, or Department of State *Bulletin*, April 27, 1953, pages 599–603.

751G.00/4–1853

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 18, 1953.

INDOCHINA

General Collins gave a briefing this morning in the Secretary's office on the Letourneau plan for cleaning up Indochina. He said that since Mr. Letourneau's departure, the Pentagon specialists had examined the Letourneau papers in detail. General Collins then said the so-called Letourneau plan was not really a plan, but simply an outline of an operational program.

The theory of this program was that the French would first clean up the area in the south and turn it over to the additional native forces which would be raised. They would then proceed to do the same thing along the coastal belt in the center with additional new native forces, and finally they would clean up the Tonkin Delta area and then be prepared to attack the main Vietminh forces in strength. As each of the three foregoing areas was cleaned up, French regular troops would be released for action against the next objective, and the native forces would see that the cleaned up areas remained secure.

General Collins said the French had been trying to clean up the area in the south with regular forces for several years. They had been unsuccessful. Under these circumstances, he did not understand very well how the newly-raised native levies would be able to hold the area in the south effectively. He expressed the view that the French must establish a firm defense line across the main line of supply from China to the Vietminh forces in the center. This defense line would have to have provision for reserves so as to maneuver properly. He explained that the supplies from China were brought through difficult and rugged country largely on coolies' backs, and that air was ineffective against such supply lines because they consisted of narrow jungle trails and because the bearers could disperse and conceal themselves in the jungle very easily.

General Collins said he was very much concerned about the totally negative French attitude toward adopting some of the training procedures with which the U.S. has had so much success in Korea. General Collins said that General Trapnell and our MAAG believed that the French arguments against the adoption of such procedures were totally spurious. He gave a copy of a message from Trapnell (attached hereto) covering this point. General Collins also expressed the view that the French concept of the battalion being the largest native unit was fallacious. He believed there should be larger units than battalion, and thought the French were reluctant to build larger units because of the fact that this would mean native officers would be in a position of greater leadership and prominence. General Collins advanced the thought that Marshal Juin might be helpful in getting the French to adopt more realistic training than this in Indochina, since he had been much impressed with what he saw in Korea.

There was some discussion about aid for the French in Indochina, with an inference that if the French did not do what the U.S. told them, they should receive no aid. Secretary Dulles commented on this discussion among MSA, Defense, and Treasury, and asked General Collins whether, if the French would not do what the U.S. wished, we should stop all aid for Indochina. He pointed out the implications of the fall of Indochina to the whole Southeast Asian picture. General Collins replied that we should not cut off aid to the French in Indochina if they did not do everything we thought they should, but that we should use maximum effort and persuasion to get them to adopt a more sensible program.

[Annex]

Telegram from the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group at Saigon (Trapnell) to the Department of the Army

SECRET [SAIGON, 15 April, 1953.]

MG 619 A. Personal for Eddleman and Clark.

1. Translation of complete French report on visit of French and Associated States representatives to ROKA tng ctrs pouched to DEPTAR 31 Mar. 53.[1] For your info general French reaction is that US instructional methods cannot be effectively adopted in Indochina since:

(*a*) No stability of front or security of rear areas exists in Indochina;
(*b*) Indochina war is not "classic" combat;
(*c*) Basic combat unit is battalion rather than division; prohibitive cost of establishing "soldier factory"; and
(*d*) French and Vietnamese temperaments are not adaptable to specialization, regimentation and subordination since these methods do not consider the personality of the individual. Report is concluded with general statement that without abandoning conceptions peculiar to French Army, inherited by Vietnamese, adoption of US methods to limited extent might result in increased output, unity of doctrine, speedier activation.

2. MAAG considers this is a discouraging report containing completely fallacious arguments, manufactured by French to justify resistance to any change or modernization of "Traditional" French methods and slanted to defend French position determined prior to Korean visit.

3. Conclusion summarized para 1 above considered here as fabrication for US consumption without any actual French commitment to adopt any US method. MAAG can see no validity to French resistance nor any reason why US training methods could not be adopted more beneficially.

4. Will exchange additional teams and continue to press for adoption of ROK training system.

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[1] Copy not found in Department of State files.

751H.11/4–2053

Memorandum by Ambassador Donald R. Heath to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)[1]

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 20, 1953.

Subject: Interview with King of Cambodia printed in *New York Times* April 19.[2]

I accompanied King Norodom Sihanouk to New York after his talks here with the Secretary and Vice President Nixon on April 17.[3] He was pleased with his reception here and the chance to expound his thesis that the situation in Cambodia is potentially dangerous and that the French must therefore promptly make further concessions. At the same time he was obviously somewhat disappointed that neither the Secretary nor the Vice President at once promised to lend American support to his demands for further concessions and had reminded him that any break in the unity of the Franco–Indo-Chinese states front against the aggression in Indo-China of the Communists would work to the advantage of the latter. The King readily admitted that the French Union forces must remain in Indochina at present but remained insistent there must be further concessions from the French towards complete Cambodian independence in order to maintain the loyalty of his subjects who, he asserted, were now bitterly suspicious of the French.

On April 18 his Ambassador, Nong Kimny, had arranged interviews with a *Time* correspondent, with James of the *New York Times* (this I only learned later) and with a representative of the Agence France Presse. Early that afternoon the King told me that he was rather inclined not to make any statements to the press. I did not urge him one way or another but remarked that if he did receive the press I was confident he would handle any controversial subject discreetly. His Ambassador persuaded him to receive James and during the interview the King must have decided, probably impulsively, that here was a chance to build a fire under the French who, he feared from his talks with Auriol and Letourneau in Paris intended to take no action on his requests for additional concessions. The evening of March 18 the King gave a dinner which was attended by M. Georges-Picot (rumored to be a possible successor to Letourneau as High Commissioner) and Hoppenot, both French delegates to the UN and the French Consul General at New York. The King rather avoided my questions as to the outcome of his interviews with the correspondents, which had lasted almost the entire afternoon and I noticed that Ambassador Nong Kimny seemed definitely depressed. Sometime after the dinner I obtained a copy of the midnight edition of the *New York Times* and then understood why the King had avoided telling me of his interviews.

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[1] Transmitted through Philip W. Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.

[2] Reference is to an article by Michael James titled "King, Here, Warns Cambodia May Rise" which appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* of Apr. 19. King Norodom Sihanouk was on an informal visit in Canada and the United States, having previously visited France to raise the question of renegotiation of the agreements governing French–Cambodian relations.

[3] In telegram 2039 to Saigon, Apr. 18, the Department of State informed the Embassy that King Sihanouk had spent Apr. 17 in Washington, participating in brief meetings with Vice President Nixon, Secretary of State Dulles, Assistant Secretary Robertson, and French Ambassador Bonnet. He also visited Mount Vernon before returning to New York. (751H.11/4–1852) No record of those meetings has been found in Department of State files, but for comments by the Vice President on his meeting with the King, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 143d Meeting of the National Security Council, May 6, p. 546.

At seven the next morning I accompanied the King to the airport. He immediately asked me rather defensively, whether I had read and what I thought of his interview with the *Times*. I inquired whether he had been correctly quoted and he replied he had, except that he had not said "Cambodian justice does not apply to the French." He had said that Cambodian justice did not apply to "foreigners." He also disapproved of the headline which described his statement as a warning that "Cambodia may rise." He had merely pointed out, he said, the dangers of the situation. The King said that he knew that America enjoyed liberty of expression and he thought the time had come to speak frankly. I answered that of course he was at liberty to say anything that he chose but asked his opinion what the reaction would be in France whose military forces and aid were necessary to the defense of the Associated States. The King said with an embarrassed chuckle, that the reaction would be very bad and then launched into a complaint of the reception of his demands by Auriol and Letourneau.[4] Auriol, he said, had not replied to his first letter until after a month had passed and when the King saw him in Paris Auriol had, the King asserted, stated that France could not give any more concessions toward perfecting Cambodian independence at this time since to do so might lead to the overthrow of the Monarchy which France favored as necessary for Cambodian unity and independence. The King remarked that this was an absurd answer or rather no answer at all. Letourneau, the King asserted, had merely said to him that the King's prestige was such that Cambodian public opinion believed and followed everything he declared. If the King told his people that Cambodia was in fact independent, that people would believe him. The King said they had believed him to date but this opinion was getting dangerously out of hand due to the effective propaganda of the rebel Son Ngoc Thanh. I asked the King whether any other arguments had been advanced against the immediate realization of some of his demands. He admitted rather reluctantly that he had been told that the temper of the French General [*National*] Assembly was such that it would not consider further concessions at this time and still support the heavy French military effort and financial outlays in Indo-China. I remarked that might indeed be a political consideration and went on to say that I hoped that when Letourneau returned to Indo-China as he was scheduled to do in a few days, that they would renew negotiations. I remarked that the Cambodian Ambassador had shown us a copy of the King's communications to President Auriol which raised a large number of issues which would require some time for consideration. We were only just completing our own study in the Department. I hoped that after further study that France and Cambodia could get together on some mutually satisfactory arrangements.

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[4] King Sihanouk presented letters regarding French–Cambodian relations to President Auriol on Mar. 5 and 25. The texts of the letters and additional documentation on the King's negotiations with French officials in Paris during March and April are printed in Gouvernement du Cambodge, *Livre jaune sur les revendications de l'indépendance du Cambodge* (Paris, Imprimerie Centrale Commerciale, 1953), vol. I, pp. 3–62 (hereafter cited as Cambodia, *Livre Jaune*, I). For the communiqué of a meeting between Sihanouk and Auriol on Mar. 25, see *L'Année Politique, 1953*, p. 573.

The King evidently feeling that further justification of his press outburst was necessary remarked that before President Mayer's visit to Washington the French Press had told of the French plan to ask the US to assume all the costs of the Indo-China war on condition that France would renounce further American aid toward the build-up of the NATO forces. I told the King that these press stories had no relation to the facts. There had been some discussions of the increased cost of the military effort in Indo-China which would result from the expansion of the National Armies of the Associated States and since France felt that she was already making her maximum outlay in Indo-China that this increase might involve additional American aid. Such an addition, however, would be only a part of the total cost of military operations. The greater part would still continue to be paid by France.

The King's plane having been announced I terminated by saying that I trusted that the press interview would not hamper mutually satisfactory French-Cambodian arrangements. I told the King that we were very glad that he had visited the US and thought that the exchange of ideas which had occurred would be helpful.

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Bonsal Memoranda"

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 20, 1953.

Subject: Prospects in Indochina

I understand that, at the time of the Mayer conversations, it was decided that we would not raise with the French the desirability of adding more troops from France or North Africa to the French Union forces in Indochina nor did we even consider raising the possibility that the French might send French conscripts to Indochina as we are sending draftees to Korea.

As a result, we are engaged in evaluating and will eventually support (there is now no alternative) a French plan or strategic concept for obtaining decisive military results in Indochina on the basis of securing the additional combat-worthy, mobile, heavily armed troops required by the French High Command through the raising, arming and training of light, "commando" native levies who will relieve heavier trained units from static defense and territorial security duties and make them available as a part of the essential strategic reserves needed by the French High Command to embark upon decisive operations. Such operations, are, under the French plan, contemplated in early 1955.

I am incompetent, obviously to pass upon the reasons for the decision set forth in the first paragraph. I can only assume it to be based upon a sound appraisal of the French political situation and of NATO requirements. I believe, however, that the decision greatly lengthens the odds on a possible favorable solution in Indochina. My reasons are as follows:

(*a*) The French plan, based on native levies and no reinforcements from abroad, calls for no serious attempt to bring the enemy organized forces (eight divisions) to a decisive battle before early 1955, i.e., those forces will continue to have relative freedom of action for the next two years.

(*b*) Although the French gave us the impression in the summer and early fall of 1952 that the 1952–1953 fighting season would prove favorable to them, the enemy has had the initiative throughout, he has seized the Thai country and he is now invading Laos. (On the other hand, Hanoi has not been threatened.)

(*c*) Although the French won a brilliant defensive victory at Nasan last December, the fact is that the mobile reserves available to the French High Command are today, as a result of enemy initiatives, perhaps as much as 50% less than they were in October 1952, whereas the enemy's power of movement seems in no way impaired. (A few additional battalions could have made all the difference to the French last fall.)

(*d*) Current prospects seem to be in the direction of increased enemy initiative; French possibilities of reaction should, of course, not be discounted but, as stated above, the reserves are very thin and, for the present, getting thinner.

(*e*) What are the prospects of raising reliable, enthusiastic native troops on our side when the enemy army of native troops is achieving an uninterrupted series of rather dramatic advances? Who will the arms the French and we are furnishing eventually be used against?

(*f*) French ineptitude and the deteriorating military situation are counteracting progress earlier made in the political field.

(*g*) In view of the above, is not our side becoming increasingly vulnerable to a phony peace or armistice offer which, if accepted—and it would have great appeal for war-weary French and natives alike—would in effect turn the area over to a Communist dominated government resting for its power upon the eight undefeated divisions of the Viet Minh.

I do not say that the French strategic plan or concept cannot succeed. Nor do I think we have any choice other than to support it and, by the promptness and efficacy of our support, to increase its chances of success. But I think those chances are slim indeed both absolutely and as compared with the chances that would be ours if we could increase the French Union forces in the Tonkin Delta area by two divisions (or more) as of the beginning of the next fighting season (October 1953). And I think it regrettable, if Indochina and Southeast Asia mean what I have been told they mean to the free world, that it should be necessary to fight this crucial battle with such modest means from outside the area (70,000 Frenchmen; 20,000 Legionnaires; 40,000 Africans including an air force of only 10,000 men with antiquated, undermanned equipment). Nothing, in my judgment would accelerate the alleged Communist peace offensive more than a clear indication of the West's determination and ability to win the war in Indochina; such indications are lacking at present.

751G.00/4-2953

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Counselor (MacArthur) [1]

PERSONAL AND SECRET SAIGON, April 21, 1953.

DEAR DOUG: I was glad to get your letter of April 10 [2] with its suggestion that despite the remote situation of Indochina, people in the Department knew where it was and in fact were devoting considerable attention to the development of the war here. I also note that the Department was a bit taken aback by the magnitude of the bill which M. Letourneau submitted, particularly since much of his statement of account was exclusive of hardware.

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[1] This letter and its enclosure were transmitted by MacArthur to Secretary Dulles for background reading. However, a handwritten notation on MacArthur's note of transmittal by Roderic L. O'Connor, Special Assistant to the Secretary, indicates that Dulles did not see this material prior to his departure for Europe on Apr. 21.

[2] Not found in Department of State files.

Very few of us who have watched the course of the war in Indochina closely are satisfied with the progress made. However, undeniably the situation is infinitely better in Vietnam than it was a few years ago. As you will see from the enclosed copy of my letter of April 10 to Frank Nash, we are in the position of trying to steer a sane middle course between undue pessimism and unjustified optimism. This requires some dexterity. On balance, as I wrote to Frank, it seems to me that a large program of aid for Indochina is fully justified and can be made to bear fruit, provided that we can exercise a sufficient amount of control and leadership to see that the hardware and actual budgetary investment are properly used and made to pay dividends.

I must confess that I am unhappy at the vague outline of the vague strategic plan which M. Letourneau presented during the Washington talks last month. Two years to wait for victory in a war which is already seven years old seems a long time; while the strategy outlined of pushing the enemy forces back against the Chinese border from which support comes does not seem to me to be the way in which to wipe out the Viet Minh war power. I believe that General Trapnell and our other military experts would prefer a more audacious war plan with the possibility of cutting across presently extended Viet Minh positions and severing the Viet Minh LOC with the Chinese base. However, the French commanders follow a Fabian policy and seem content, at least under the present High Command, to sit in well-fortified strong points and hope that the enemy will attack them where they are strongest. This, of course, no intelligent enemy commander is going to do.

I have gone thus into detail about certain aspects of the military problem because I have the conviction that this year only do we have an unusual opportunity to tell our French friends very frankly what we think is lacking in their strategic concept and what we think ought to be done by them if they are to receive that added U.S. assistance for which they have asked. The new administration has every right to say that it needs to take a new look at the Indochina war and every right to demand that new conditions be met. However, next year the case will not be the same as by that time, through whatever arrangements we have agreed upon this year, we will have given at least tacit and perhaps overt approval to the war plan for Indochina. Accordingly, if we want to speak frankly, boldly, and of course always in a constructive spirit, the time is now.

I feel that I am talking to the converted in this respect, because I see in the Secretary's great speech on foreign policy to the American Society of Newspaper Editors,[3] which arrived in yesterday's radio bulletin, that he has said we would be favorably disposed to giving increased military and financial assistance to plans which are "realistically designed" to end this war.[4] Only realism will justify the increased assistance which it is in our power to give.

I am sending a copy of this too-lengthy screed to Frank Nash and the two Phils—Bonsal and Sprouse—and presume that when Don Heath gets back from his well-earned holiday either you or Phil Bonsal will show it to him.

With kindest regards, believe me,

Sincerely yours,

ROB

[Enclosure]

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Nash)

SECRET AND PERSONAL

SAIGON, April 10, 1953.

DEAR FRANK: I hope you are no more surprised than I am at the Saigon dateline. This certainly is a contrast to my recent concerns with the military and political situation in the Middle East, but I must say that in trading a revolution for a war I find myself in an exceedingly interesting spot. As you no doubt learned from Don Heath when he was back in Washington for consultation in the recent talks with the French Prime Minister and his colleagues, the Department rushed me out here to remain in charge of the Embassy while the Ambassador was back in the States, and thus yours truly remains the boy on the burning deck and still very much at your service.

I have been a little concerned in recent weeks to see that some of the military reporting on the posture of affairs in Indochina is distinctly on the pessimistic side. One of the most recent of our distinguished military visitors, Gen. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, in fact sent off a Top

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[3] On Apr. 18, Secretary Dulles delivered an address titled "The First 90 Days" before the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington. The speech was broadcast on network radio and television. For text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, Apr. 27, 1953, pp. 603–608.

[4] The passage under reference read as follows: "In relation to Indochina, the French Government and the Associated States have been told that we would be favorably disposed to giving increased military and financial assistance to plans realistically designed to suppress the Communist-inspired civil war, which for 6 years has wracked the area and seriously drained the metropolitan resources of France."

Secret message to Admiral Radford (OARMA Saigon MC-69-53)[5] in which he strongly criticized the French and Vietnamese tactical organizations, the alleged weakness of the French High Command, and the antiquated methods (in his view) which are being used here in fighting the Communist Viet Minh. I was also shown yesterday a Top Secret despatch from our Naval Attaché to ONI,[6] which conveys the general impression that the French themselves have no particular desire to win the war in Indochina.

I believe that these reports, although sent with every good intention in the world, are misleading. Certainly no one could be more impatient than Ambassador Heath, General Trapnell, or myself to see our French and Vietnamese allies get on with terminating hostilities in Indochina with a resounding defeat of the Communists. However, in this strange conflict, haste is made slowly. If we are to be able to utilize native energies for the liberation of Vietnam, we must keep in mind that the Vietnamese Army per se did not exist until de Lattre called it into being on a shoestring only a scant two years ago. Much progress has, however, been made in creating new formations, and I think that once the new battalions are blooded and their officers and NCO's have had combat experience, we may look with ever increasing confidence to a good performance in the future.

The French commanders as soldiers are, of course, not happy with the posture in which they find themselves. They are compelled to spend an inordinate amount of military manpower on merely maintaining their LOC and mounting guard on such areas of the country as are vital to the maintenance of a war base in Vietnam. However, once new native battalions have been trained, there should be no reason why the guard duty could not be taken over by the Vietnamese themselves, thus releasing the French Union professional forces for that war of maneuver which alone can beat the Viet Minh on their own ground.

This is a rather long-winded way of saying that, although perfection has not been attained in Indochina, the situation is not in my opinion as gloomy as some of these recent military reports would suggest. For my part, I am willing to venture that, if you can give us the arms, we can assure Washington that both the French and the Vietnamese will use them with ever increasing effect until the day comes that the free world forces will chalk up a victory in Indochina against international Communism.

Best regards, plus,
Cheers,

ROBERT MCCLINTOCK

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[5] Not printed.
[6] Not identified.

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 152

United States Minutes of United States–French Conversations, First Session, at the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, April 22, 1953, 3:30 p.m.[1]

SECRET

Present: French—MM. Bidault, Pleven, Bourges-Maunoury, Letourneau, Maurice Schumann, Alphand and adviser
U.S.—Messrs. Dulles, Wilson, Humphrey, Stassen, Dillon, Draper[2] and advisers.

[Here follows discussion of French rearmament and problems concerning the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.]

The Secretary believed continuance of substantial economic aid to France will have to take the form of assistance to the prosecution of the Indochina war under some kind of program which our military people can tell our Congress seems to make sense and holds promise of a satisfactory outcome, perhaps in a couple of years.

The JCS had reported that the reaction from French visits to Korea was not very satisfactory, that nothing we were doing there could be used. We were not surprised about that initial reaction because it took our own people in Korea a very long time to realize the capabilities of the South Koreans. There is a tendency to minimize those capabilities. The problem is to some extent political as well as military. For instance, while decisions at a high level are taken in Paris regarding the Associated States, implementation or interpretation in the local light may be in a different spirit, in a community which has so long been in colonial status and where certain relations have been established between white and colored people. For instance, social relations may be lacking and some people not admitted to certain clubs. As far as implementing those decisions in the field is concerned, and the relations with the local people, we realize that we have a similar problem in our south for which we have not always found a solution.

It is not easy, but before the U.S. can give any commitment even as far as the Executive is concerned, we would like to feel that we have answers, or at least observations *a*) allowing us to picture our help honorably and fairly as not merely economic aid but as aid which has a particular purpose, and *b*) constituting a program which we could say from the political standpoint is one which has a fair chance of success in changing the rather gloomy aspect of the affair at the present time. With a program for Indochina on a joint political-military basis it is possible to get our Congress to make a substantial contribution. Our own Congress is desperately anxious to reduce taxes. Taxes are being cut in Britain and in Canada and everybody says we should do the same. Cutting down governmental income means a still larger deficit. Any further aid must therefore be presented in an extremely effective and appealing way to get it through. There is a realization of the critically important role that the French play. "You help us to help you." We have explained ways in which that could be done.

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[1] Secretary of State Dulles, Secretary of Defense Wilson, Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey, and Mutual Security Director Stassen were at Paris for the 11th Session of the North Atlantic Council, Apr. 23–25. While in Paris, they participated in bipartite and tripartite conversations with their French and British counterparts on a variety of subjects of common concern. For documentation on the Council session and the meetings with British and French officials during the same period, see volume v.

[2] William H. Draper, U.S. Special Representative in Europe, Mutual Security Agency.

Mr. Wilson said that we notice in Korea that by training the Koreans we give them confidence and faith, a feeling of unity and competence that they can go on their own, that really gets the people together. Also, he was sure the French look forward to the day when it will not be necessary to have so many troops from France over there. He thought the French wanted them to be strong enough to keep the country free and be part of the spirit of French influence but did not want to have French troops there forever in large numbers. If those people can strengthen themselves they cannot only meet the present emergency but also take care of themselves.

M. Letourneau recalled the time he had spent at the Pentagon to explain the program and the conditions for its realization. He had said at that time that one cannot seriously doubt—even though it is being done—the will of France as regards the freedom of Vietnam and the constitution of national armies since they had been doing it for three years. The plan has been pushed so that French troops can be reduced but also to get the states themselves to develop a national sentiment that will allow them to face local difficulties as soon as possible. Complete withdrawal of the French is not involved. General Clark, when he came to [*from*?] Korea, was very proud of his Korean army but said that if the U.S. left Korea it would all disappear. Therefore, he wishes to maintain the U.S. effort in Korea just like the French in Indochina. It is true that the Laotian affair involves a singular aggravation. An operational plan had been given to the Pentagon, including certain inevitable risks. Within 2½ years, as President Eisenhower has said, it would allow us to arrive at a situation where the picture would be reversed although it would not mean complete victory. That plan is essentially based on the development of national armies. It requires for its solution finances, cadres and rapid training of units.

The French missions which have been received in Korea were very useful. Marshal Juin himself has brought back information that the

French propose to use in the formation of the Vietnam army. But the problem is not the same in Indochina as in Korea. The problems facing the two armies are not comparable, but some lessons can be applied.

M. Letourneau did not believe that Saigon headquarters can be fairly accused of not entirely applying the political policies of Paris. The French have no reason to fear that the Vietnam government would be more demanding when they have an army. Their exigencies are not worrisome since the Vietnam government cannot pursue any other policy. He said he had not many ways of showing good faith and the good faith of his subordinates except perhaps to submit to a lie detector, which would not be customary. As to racial discrimination, the question of clubs, the problem has never arisen in Indochina as in other colonies because there has always been close touch between local and French families. The problem arises even less now that there is a Vietnamese government. There may be individual cases, but one cannot draw conclusions from them about the good faith of the French. The French generals are not more stupid than other generals, and they want victories and know that their only hope are the native armies, and the key to that is confidence in and fairness to the Vietnamese.

He had the feeling that the operational plan discussed in Washington seemed convincing to the people he saw there and that not much else could be done. The solution seemed reasonable and if the plan were put into effect the only problem would be financial. It was felt that Congress would find it acceptable. It remains capable of execution even today. The Laos affair is unpleasant but it should not interfere with the development of the Vietnamese forces.

[Here follows discussion of aid to France in general.]

Secretary Dulles . . . said it would be the hope of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government—we can at the present time speak only of recommendations to Congress—that if there is a program for Indochina which has the endorsement of our military advisers, which has a chance of success, would propose a figure comparable to $525 million for this year and there are circumstances where we might possibly increase that a little bit. However, that would have to be a program where we could in effect say to Congress: This program has enough chance of success that if you invest a certain amount for a certain time, it will largely clear up the situation—not, as M. Letourneau has pointed out, in terms of actual victory but by reducing the dimensions similar to those in Malaya or with the Huks in the Philippines. Then there was the question whether we do that if the French reduce their over-all military expenditure. That would mean that we assume a larger percentage of the total rather than an increase. Some slight adjustment may not be impossible but we felt that it would not be very practicable to do that on a scale that our people felt the French had run out and we were holding the bag.

(Complimentary exchanges and a rather hurried close in view of the scheduled U.S.–British bilaterals. It was agreed that if the French desired the remaining agenda items could be covered in a subsequent meeting.)[3]

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[3] For extracts from the U.S. record of the second U.S.–French meeting, Apr. 26, see p. 507.

751G.00/4–2253

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 22, 1953.

Subject: Effect of Possible Korean Armistice on Situation in Indochina[2]

If an armistice is achieved in Korea it will be due primarily to the show of effective strength there by the United States with a certain amount of backing from the United Nations. The cost in men and matériel to the Chinese Communists and to the North Koreans and in matériel to the Soviet Union has been heavy and presumably very influential if not conclusive in the decision to proceed toward an armistice.

These factors are not operative in Indochina. Franco-Vietnamese strength has not in the past few months increased its pressure on the Viet Minh with its wholly native force of at least 350,000; on the contrary the latter have maintained and pursued the initiative since October, 1952. The enemy is now invading Laos after having seized the Thai country last fall. There is no manpower drain on the Soviet Union or on the Chinese Communists. The cost in matériel to the Communist world of the struggle is relatively slight, particularly in comparison with the effort being made by France and the United States. And United Nations interest in and potential support of the free world side in Indochina would hardly be impressive if the issue were raised in the UN.

Therefore, the reasoning of the enemy regarding Indochina will be quite different from that he seems to be applying to Korea. There can be no interest in Moscow or Peking in a cessation of hostilities except on conditions which will result immediately or in the short term in the removal of French military power from Indochina and in control of the country by a government or governments which would be a part of the Communist world. This reasoning, of course, would be modified if the enemy thought there was a probability that in the near future the strength of our side would be materially increased; presumably he has no more evidence than we of such a possibility. He will at least reserve his judgment as to whether our side can develop sufficient effective native forces to alter the military equation.

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[1] A copy of this memorandum was transmitted to U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.

[2] An armistice in Korea was signed at Panmunjom on July 27, 1953; for documentation on the Korean armistice negotiations, see volume xv.

On the basis of the above summary analysis the probabilities in Indochina in the event of an armistice in Korea would seem to be the following:

(1) A continuation and possibly to some extent an intensification of assistance in arms, equipment, training and advice to the Viet Minh from Communist China. (There are limits imposed by transportation routes, terrain and capabilities of the Viet Minh.)

(2) A continued absence of overt Chinese intervention or of enemy air. (There is no reason in the present military and political situation why the enemy should run the risk of free world counteraction against Communist China or even of UN complications.)

(3) The Soviet and the Chinese Communists will presumably turn a deaf ear to any attempt to engage them in any discussion of the situation in Indochina unless they believe the Viet Minh is in jeopardy. They have no reason to think so at present.

(4) An offer by the Viet Minh, heavily bolstered with propaganda lures and threats (for local consumption) of a cease fire to be followed by democratic processes and by the departure of foreign troops may be anticipated. Peace after over six years of war is attractive to Frenchmen and to Vietnamese—particularly in the absence of any convincing prospect of military progress on our side. And the power of decision as to how long and under what conditions the struggle will continue is no longer exclusively in the not too aggressive hands of the French; the creation and development of the Vietnamese National Army and the increased control thereof exercised by the Vietnamese Government give to Bao Dai and to Tam an increased share in the decision of peace or war. Such an armistice offer would certainly at least complicate the military effort and the political situation on our side.

The above emphasizes, if any emphasis were needed, the fact that the free world position in Indochina is highly vulnerable and would become more vulnerable in the event of an armistice in Korea. The French and ourselves can survey the course of events of the past six years; we at least can see plenty of occasions on which the French could have behaved more effectively. But we are today confronted with six or eight enemy divisions the movements of which our side seems unable to control beyond interdicting them from more than a rather heavy penetration of the Tonkin Delta (i.e., Hanoi and Haiphong at least seem safe).

751H.11/4–2253

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 22, 1953.

Subject: Interview with King of Cambodia Printed in the *New York Times* April 19.

The purpose of this memorandum is to supplement for the record Ambassador Heath's memorandum of April 20 regarding the above subject.

On Sunday afternoon, April 19, Ambassador Heath, Mr. Hoey and I agreed that it would be desirable, if the King of Cambodia were to make further statements to the press, that he stress some factors in the situation which might have a more constructive effect on American public opinion than those which had been raised by His Majesty in the *New York Times* interview. Accordingly, that evening I telephoned Mr. Getz[1] in San Francisco and suggested to him that if His Majesty was going to speak further to the press he might include: (*a*) the fact that the questions affecting Cambodian independence to which he had referred in the *New York Times* interview had been submitted to President Auriol and that consequently they might be considered as under negotiation between France and Cambodia; (*b*) some reference to the progress which Cambodia has made toward independence in recent years and to the positive attributes of sovereignty which the Cambodian Government enjoys; and (*c*) a reiteration of the importance of Franco-Cambodian cooperation and of the important role played by French manpower and resources in the defense of Cambodia against Communism.

Later that evening Ambassador Nong Kimny telephoned me and I told him what I had already said to Mr. Getz, stressing that, of course, we were not trying in any way to influence His Majesty or to comment adversely on what His Majesty had already said.

The next morning Nong Kimny telephoned me to say that His Majesty had been very much bothered by newspapermen in San Francisco and had consequently reached the decision to remain in his room to avoid them until his departure for Honolulu. I expressed the hope that some way might be found for His Majesty to get some enjoyment out of his stay in San Francisco. Nong Kimny said that some thought had been given to the possibility of having the police protect His Majesty from the newspapermen but that idea had been rejected as being bad public relations. Nong Kimny also told me that the San

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[1] King Norodom Sihanouk returned to Cambodia via San Francisco and Japan. John I. Getz of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs escorted him to San Francisco.

Francisco press had reported that His Majesty was met at the airport by the French Consul General who "whisked him away" before the newspapermen had a chance to ask him anything. (I gather from my own Sunday conversation with the French Ambassador that the French are indignant about His Majesty's statement and have probably let him know it in a straightforward manner; I took occasion to tell the French Ambassador that from our point of view, what was needed was emphasis of the realities of Cambodian independence which the French and ourselves have affirmed in public from time to time as well as emphasis upon the fact that the differences between His Majesty and the French Government are under negotiation.)

With regard to the specific suggestions which I had made to him the previous night Nong Kimny replied as follows:

(*a*) It is difficult to say that negotiations are in progress between France and Cambodia because His Majesty's letters of March 5 and March 18[2] have been unanswered as yet by President Auriol and there was no official conversation on the subject during His Majesty's stay in Paris. His Majesty has left his Prime Minister in Paris but has received no report of any progress.

(*b*) From the point of view of the Cambodian Government, there has been no progress toward independence since the 1949 Accords;[3] on the contrary the agreements which were supposed to clarify those accords have been of a restrictive nature and have diminished the rather flexible framework which was reached by the basic accords. The Cambodian people therefore fail to have any sensation of progress in this direction; on the contrary

(*c*) The fact is that the majority of the Cambodian people currently wish to leave the French Union although His Majesty desires and is seeking ways and means of remaining in the French Union.

Later the same day, Monday, April 21, Mr. Millet, of the French Embassy, called on Ambassador Heath and myself to discuss the situation. He recognized that the French handling of His Majesty in Paris had been something less than deft. He suggested that perhaps the bad effect of the *New York Times* interview could be diminished if His Majesty could issue some sort of statement on departing from the United States. This statement could touch upon the points of a constructive nature in Franco-Cambodian relations and on the need for Franco-Cambodian cooperation to which reference has been made above.

Ambassador Heath telephoned the Cambodian Ambassador regarding this subject. He particularly emphasized the importance of American public opinion in relation to American aid for the struggle against Communism in Indochina and stated that it was important that American public opinion have a broad understanding of Franco-Cambodian relations and of the present state of Cambodian independence rather than having its attention focused exclusively on particular points of difference.

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[2] For texts, see Cambodia, *Livre Jaune*, I, pp. 3–18 and 28–30.

[3] For text of the French–Cambodian Treaty of Nov. 8, 1949, see *Bulletin Officiel de Haut-Commissariat de France en Indochine* (Saigon), Mar. 26, 1953, pp. 262–267.

That night Nong Kimny dictated to me over the telephone the text of a statement which His Majesty might make the following day on his departure from San Francisco. A rough translation of that text is attached.[4] Obviously it would be unsatisfactory for the purposes which Ambassador Heath and Mr. Millet had in mind.

On Tuesday morning Ambassador Heath had a further conversation with Ambassador Nong Kimny in the course of which the Ambassador suggested that rather than bring up the matters already dealt with in the *New York Times* interview the statement might confine itself to an expression of appreciation for the courtesies extended His Majesty in the United States and an expression of determination to continue the struggle in Cambodia with the help of French and American aid. The conversation ended indecisively. Apparently His Majesty made no statement on his departure from San Francisco.

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[4] Not printed.

751J.11/4-2353 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 23, 1953—10 p. m.

5644. Sent Saigon niact 224 repeated information Department niact 5644. From Dulles. Letourneau suggested to Secretary 23rd April that the French had been endeavoring to get the King of Laos to leave his capital where he was in imminent danger of capture by advancing Communist forces. Letourneau feared King would make noble gesture and refuse to leave.

Letourneau feared that if captured, Communists would set King up as Communist figurehead and be utilized as peddler of Communist line. Felt this would have disastrous results in entire area. Requested that our people make earnest plea to him to leave.

Secretary feels there may be merit in this suggestion and stated he would pass it along. For your information Secretary says he had insufficient knowledge of local situation to know whether such action on our part desirable but passing it on for action at your discretion.

[DULLES]

751J.5/4-2453: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 24, 1953—5 p. m.

1994. Department pass Moscow, Rangoon; sent priority Paris 303 for the Secretary, repeated Department 1994, London 22, Moscow 1, Bangkok 74, Rangoon 16, Singapore 45, Vientiane, Hanoi, Taipei unnumbered. Will make later recommendations re Paris telegram 224, repeated Department 5644, April 23.[1] Present telegram is concerned with political problem which we face following, as I expect, fall of Luang Prabang to advancing Viet Minh forces.

Vientiane's 31 to Department, repeated Saigon 174, Paris unnumbered April 23[2] indicates that Gautier, Salan, and Crown Prince yesterday were to discuss question of whether France would sponsor protest to UN. Knowing Salan and Gautier, I am certain they will counsel against such a course.

My recommendation is that Secretary indicate firmly to French Government that it should present Laotian protest to Security Council. US should support but not sponsor resolution. Although UN action will not prevent successful Viet Minh military operations, reference of invasion to SC will present two alternatives, either of which may be to our political advantage:

1. If USSR vetoes SC resolution, onus for lack of action re invasion of Laos will fall on Soviets.
2. If USSR abstains, Chinese Commies may feel their present move in SEA does not have Soviet backing.

If Western Powers fail to make an issue of Laotian invasion, it seems inevitable that such countries as Siam and Burma (cf Bangkok's 2080, April 22)[2] will feel that present threat to SEA is of little concern to West. Furthermore, failure to take cognizance of Laotian invasion in as wide a frame of reference as possible would tacitly accept contention of Viet Minh forces that they are fighting a civil war for "liberation" of peoples held in yoke by French imperialism. We ourselves did not accept North Korean thesis of civil war against South Koreans and it seems difficult to understand how a similar contention could be allowed to pass here.

In light of methodical advance preparations which characterize Viet Minh military operations, I doubt if present attack on Laos was something thought up at last moment by Commies. However, it has immense potentiality in establishing a secure base for further subversive activity throughout SEA, and Chinese Commies will see advantages so far as their internal position is concerned in an easy victory in SEA which might offset any concessions which might have to be made in connection with a Korean armistice. Obverse of medal is that Chinese by successes gained this area could build up potential concessions to trade off with west re Korean armistice or general settlement Far Eastern Affairs.

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[1] For text of telegram 5644 from Paris, see *supra*; regarding Saigon's action pursuant to telegram 5644, see telegram 1998 from Saigon, Apr. 24, *infra*.

[2] Not printed.

McClintock

751J.11/4–2453: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET Saigon, April 24, 1953—2 p. m.

1998. Sent Paris niact 307 (for Secretary) repeated Department 1998. Following is English text of letter in French which I am requesting Thomson to present from me to Prince Savang tomorrow.

"Dear Prince Savang:

I trust you will forgive the informality of this personal letter, but the need is urgent and I rely upon our mutual interest in maintaining the integrity of Laos to justify so candid an approach.

I have asked Mr. Thomson, our Chargé d'Affaires in Vientiane, to approach His Majesty, your august father, indicating the solicitude felt by the Secretary of State, the Honorable John Foster Dulles, in the welfare of His Majesty and the hope of the Secretary of State that the King and yourself will not undergo the risk of capture by the advancing Communist forces. In light of the Viet Minh drive toward Luang Prabang, withdrawal from that capital would seem the course of wisdom. It is our belief that the maintenance of the Royal Laotian Government in close contact with its sovereign and with the Crown Prince is essential if the independence of Laos is successfully to be defended and the present course of events redressed. Your Highness is familiar with the history of the Second World War when many royal governments, even when forced into exile, maintained the courage of their peoples, discomfited the enemy, and eventually returned triumphant to their native soil.

I have asked Mr. Thomson to be of any aid he can and trust that I shall have personal pleasure of calling upon you and upon His Majesty, the King, at such place of residence as you may choose to select. Sincerely yours".[1]

McClintock

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[1] The communication was actually delivered on Apr. 29. In telegram 2041 from Saigon, Apr. 30, McClintock relayed the following information sent from Vientiane by Chargé David R. Thomson in telegram 187 of Apr. 29: "I presented letter to Savang here this morning. He said he has entire responsibility King's safety. Savang highly confident regarding defense Luang Prabang and considers critical point not yet reached; therefore, King to remain, as key inspiration defense. Implied he would get King out and stay Luang Prabang himself if situation worsens. . . . I presented all arguments, but Savang's mind made up. . . . I believe audience King would be superfluous." (751J.11/4–3053)

In telegram 111 to Vientiane (2039 to Washington), Apr. 30, McClintock transmitted the following response: "I fully concur your view non-utility of seeing King. . . . However, trust you will continue impress on Savang great importance our government attaches to royal family remaining out of Communist hands. By 'royal family' I mean also Savang. It would be most unfortunate if he should be used as Communist tool." (751J.11/4–3053)

751G.5/4–2453

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Halaby) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 24, 1953.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: During the course of the French-United States talks in Washington last month, the French Minister for the Associated States presented to the Department of Defense the proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were requested to provide a military appraisal of the proposed Plan and comment on the feasibility of United States logistic support of the Plan as requested by the French in light of other requirements and commitments for United States Military Aid.

Forwarded herewith, as inclosure, are the comments and recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina.

The Acting Secretary of Defense accepts the substance of the comments and recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and has forwarded them to Secretary Wilson and General Bradley in Paris.

In the light of Minister Letourneau's request and our assurances to him, these views and attached documents must be handled with utmost security precautions and on a strict "need to know" basis.

Sincerely yours, For the Asst Sec Def (ISA):

N. E. HALABY

[Enclosure]

Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 21 April 1953.

Subject: Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina.

1. With reference to your memorandum, dated 2 April 1953,[1] subject as above, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the proposed French plan for concluding the war in Indochina and submit herewith their comments (Appendix)[2] and recommendations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff point out that the French plan was not presented in writing. The present knowledge of this plan is limited to that obtained

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[1] Not printed.

[2] The appendix and annexes "A"–"F" are not printed.

through the minutes of oral presentations by M. Letourneau and General Allard, supplemented by questions related thereto during subsequent discussions.

2. While the French plan as presented was lacking in detail, certain weaknesses are indicated which are summarized briefly as follows:

a. It does not appear to be sufficiently aggressive.

b. Excessive effort appears to be devoted to cleaning up Viet Minh pockets without sufficient consideration being given to cutting the enemy's supply lines, particularly in Northern Indochina.

c. It appears that insufficient emphasis is given to placing of responsibility in the hands of the Vietnamese and the training of leaders therefor.

d. The plan appears to rely extensively on small-unit operations.

While the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the French plan could be improved in light of the foregoing comments, they feel that the plan is workable. Further, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agree that augmentation of Vietnamese forces will be necessary in order to bring the conflict in Indochina to a successful conclusion.

3. In connection with the foregoing and the comments set forth in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Appendix hereto, attention is invited to the following pertinent documents which are attached as Annexes hereto:

a. A dispatch received from the Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group (Indochina) (DA IN 257701) (Annex "A");

b. Dispatches requesting General Clark's views on the strategic situation in Indochina (DA 934687) (Annex "B"); his initial views (DA IN 251110) (Annex "C"); his modified views (DA IN 253811) (Annex "D"); and his final recommendations (DA IN 258870) (Annex "E").

c. A dispatch received from Admiral Radford expressing his views on the strategic situation in Indochina (260315Z) (Annex "F").

It will be noted that General Clark's views are somewhat more optimistic than those expressed in this memorandum. This may be due in part to the fact that General Clark's views are probably based almost entirely on information acquired during his brief visit to Indochina.

4. While reserving further opinion as to the merits of the French plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the proposed augmentation of forces in Indochina be supported subject to the following:

a. There will be no compensating reduction in over-all U.S. armed forces because of fiscal limitations.

b. The specific requests for U.S. support will be processed through normal channels for screening of force requirements and scale and type of equipment.

c. France and the Associated States will contribute to the maximum extent of their capabilities.

d. The additional financial support beyond that for MDAP requirements necessary to assure the successful execution of the plan will be made available by the United States from other than U.S. military or MDAP funds.

e. No financial commitment will be made to France until:

(1) The cost of the program can be considered in relation to all other MDA needs; and

(2) A decision has been made to authorize adding new requirements generated by the French plan to the regular MDAP for FY 1954 (as presented by the military departments to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Bureau of the Budget in the FY 1954 Special Budget Review), and to MDA Programs subsequent to FY 1954.

5. The Joint Chiefs of Staff feel that as much pressure as is feasible should be placed on the French from a political point of view to obtain a clear-cut commitment to:

a. Modernize training methods;

b. Prosecute the proposed plan with redoubled determination and vigor;

c. Expedite the transfer of responsibility to the Governments of the Associated States and accelerate the rate of training of indigenous forces with emphasis on leadership training;

d. Intensify efforts to cut enemy supply lines;

e. Wrest the initiative from the Viet Minh and take more effective steps to insure that recaptured areas are retained under Vietnamese control; and

f. Utilize more extensively, where appropriate, units larger than battalions.

In connection with the requirement for improvement in training methods, the United States would be willing to furnish such specialized assistance as may be desired by the French.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

W. G. LALOR

Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Secretary

State-JCS meetings, lot 61 D 417

Substance of Discussions of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at the Pentagon Building, April 24, 1953, 11 a. m.[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET

PRESENT

General Collins
General Vandenberg
Admiral Fechteler
General Ruffner [2]
General White
Admiral Fife [3]
Colonel Carns
Admiral Duncan

Mr. Paul H. Nitze
Mr. Walter Robertson
Mr. U. A. Johnson
Mr. Frederick E. Nolting
Mr. J. Chase
Mr. Charles C. Stelle

CIA

Mr. Allen Dulles [4]
General Cabell [5]

NSC

Mr. S. Everett Gleason
General Gerhard [*Gerhart*]

For the Indochina discussion:
Mr. Heath
Mr. Bonsal
Mr. Gullion [6]

. . . .

Indochina

Mr. Nitze: On Indochina we thought that it would be helpful if we could get clear on how the comments you have already made on the LeTourneau Plan stand up in the light of the recent developments in Laos.

General Vandenberg: I think that the situation in Laos serves to emphasize our comments. The JCS have the feeling on the LeTourneau Plan and on the situation in Indochina that the French have not really been taking the native people into their confidence. They don't seem to trust the native forces enough to want to use them in large units and they only plan on using the native forces in very small units. Their strategy has been completely defensive and called for merely local actions by small units. The French have known about the possibility of this Laos attack for a long time and they have done and are doing nothing to stop it. In the plan they have presented they want to start where it is easy, in the South, and they don't seem to want to go after main enemy supply lines and main concentration of enemy forces, which are in the North. The whole French position seems to be a defensive one and one of not really wanting to fight the war to a conclusion. I feel that if the French keep on in this manner, we will be pouring money down a rathole. There have been some funny things going on in Indochina. The French request for C–119's hasn't been made through our MAAG. Our officers are not invited to witness operations and their advice is neither wanted nor accepted.

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[1] This State Department draft was not cleared with the participants.

[2] Maj. Gen. Clark L. Ruffner, Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

[3] Vice Adm. James Fife, U.S. Naval Deputy Commander in Chief, Allied Forces, Mediterranean, who had served as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Operations), August 1951–March 1953.

[4] Director of Central Intelligence.

[5] Lt. Gen. Charles P. Cabell, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; Director of the Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 1951–April 1953.

[6] Edmund A. Gullion, member of the Policy Planning Staff; Counselor of the Legation at Saigon, 1950–1952.

Mr. Nitze: Our question was directed primarily at what was meant in your evaluation of the plan when you said that it was "workable". We wanted to know whether you thought it was workable in the sense that it would get us over the hump in a military way or whether you thought that it could be carried out but you were making no estimate as to the actual probable results.

General Vandenberg: We have listed our reservations to the plan and I think what we had in mind was that if the French did a lot of other things, at the same time there might be some slight chance of success in what they are proposing. It is very difficult for us to say whether the French Plan will actually succeed or not.

General Collins: It is difficult for us here in Washington without the detailed knowledge of the situation which the French have in the field to say that a French plan will or will not work.

Ambassador Heath: There is one point that I think should be made with respect to what General Vandenberg has said. I don't think it is fair to say that the French are plotting to hold back the natives and not let them get ahead too fast and that is the reason why they are not planning to use large native units. That might possibly have been the case two years ago, but I don't think we can say that is the case now.

General Vandenberg: One thing that is difficult for me to understand is that the people in Southeast Asia are certainly no poorer fighting material than the South Koreans were. We have had real success in training South Koreans rapidly. We feel that it is difficult to develop successful leaders if you restrict them to small unit operations.

General Collins: How are the French going to find out if the natives can develop leadership if they don't give them a chance to gain experience? I personally have been shocked by the last message [7] that has come in from Linares. It seems to me that it seems to carry all the earmarks of a message by a man who admits defeat and thinks there is nothing he can do about it.

Mr. Nitze: It is true that the political situation in Indochina is not really comparable to that in Korea. The French have to be concerned not only about the military capability of the native forces but also about their loyalty to the French.

Mr. Robertson: From this discussion it seems to me that the message which went to Paris on your evaluation of the Letourneau Plan is somewhat ambiguous.[8] That message says that the plan is workable and although it lists your reservations, gives the general impression that you approve of the plan. Your discussion here doesn't give that impression.

General Vandenberg: We can't say from here that the plan is workable. If pressure were applied to the French to carry out the reservations that we pose and if they should carry them out, then the plan might work.

Mr. Robertson: Our Secretary has made the point that it is very difficult to apply effective pressure on a government which is in as weak a political situation as the French Government is. Pressure on a government will only get effective results if the government that we apply pressure on is in a position to get things done.

General Vandenberg: It seems to me that it may not be necessary to go about it in such a way as to apply pressure to the whole French government. If your Secretary could talk to the French Minister of War and make our points to him, it might be that he could get the Minister of War to light a fire under the Chief of Staff in Indochina or maybe if necessary to relieve him and get a more aggressive general out there.

General Collins: I think that we have had an experience which might illustrate the only way you can get the French to do things. We have urged them, for I don't know how long, to send some of their people to Korea to see if they couldn't get useful ideas of what we are doing and in the line of training. For a long time nobody came. Then Clark and I personally worked on Juin, using the fact that we were both personally acquainted with him and urging him to get some of the French in Indochina to come up and look things over in Korea. So finally they came, and from all we could tell they were enthusiastic with what they saw and what we were doing. Then they went back to Indochina and they dropped right back in the same old groove. They pointed out all sorts of differences between the Korean situation and the Indochina situation, and found a lot of reasons why they couldn't do the things in Indochina which we are doing in Korea. The real truth is that they don't do what we are doing in Korea in Indochina because they really don't want to. In my opinion General Salan is really a second rater. What they need out there is a man who is really a good general. In my thinking Guillaume [9] is the type of man they need.

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[7] Not identified.

[8] The message has not been identified. For the message sent after this meeting, see Tosec 9, Apr. 24, p. 503.

Ambassador Heath: The French have always leaned towards having a "tame" general in Indochina.

General Vandenberg: Why is that, Mr. Ambassador?

Ambassador Heath: The French politicians want a man whom they think they can manage.

General Vandenberg: Doesn't that really mean that the French haven't given up all hopes of holding on to their position in Indochina.

Ambassador Heath: Yes, I think that is true.

General Vandenberg: Then in that case the natives can't feel that they are fighting for themselves. They must feel that they are fighting only for the French.

Mr. Bonsal: We can't make the picture too black and white. The practical elements of independence are actually being given to the Associated States. The basic decisions to arm the natives and to give the local governments authority have already been taken by the French. But the situation is that the enemy has had five years to train his army and to train his leaders. The French and we really only started two years ago to develop a native army. The enemy therefore has a considerable head start. Our present problem is the French have presented us with a plan. The question is how and through what channel are we going to convey our ideas to the French. And another question is what ideas should we present to them. There is, for example, the suggestion which Mayer made to the President—that we should assign some officers to Indochina to work with the French in the field of strategy and operational plans.

General Collins: We have a very able man out there now in Trapnell, but the French only permit him to be a supply officer and so far the French have never welcomed his suggestions. This is the first I have heard of the French proposal that we assign somebody to work with them on plans and operations and this is a brand new proposal.

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[9] General of the Army Augustin Guillaume, French Resident-General in Morocco; Commander in Chief of French Forces in Germany, 1948–1951.

Mr. Bonsal: I think we should decide how we are going to go further on this particular point with the French and also how we are going to give the French our evaluation of the plan that they have presented.

General Collins: I think we should be clear that we really have not been presented with a plan by the French. What we have been talking about is really what we got from an oral presentation which the French made while they were here.

Admiral Fechteler: Radford is in Indochina today. Should I relay to him what Mayer said to the President and ask for his ideas?

General Collins: My own feeling is that we should find out from the French in Paris how far the French are prepared to go and how much assistance they want in plans and training.

Ambassador Heath: Could I go back to your discussion of the type of leader that the French need in Indochina and ask if it should prove that Guillaume was unavailable or unacceptable, if you had any other French general in mind.

General Collins: Koenig[10] is, from everything I hear, an able general, but Ridgway and our people in France would have a better basis for opinions on particular French generals than we do here.

General Vandenberg: We can't pick a man for the French, but we should tell them what we think is required in the situation.

Mr. Nitze: In looking at the LeTourneau Plan we had the feeling for our part that with what we considered to be politically feasible both in Indochina and in France, there really weren't too great prospects that this plan would achieve complete success, even in the limited objectives which it lays out. But then if you look at the alternative of what would happen if we should cut down our assistance to the French and at the various things that might happen, then it shapes up like a real defeat in Indochina. So we lean to the view that since the alternative is so bleak, we probably should go along and give this plan a try even though it may not achieve what the French are saying it might.

General Collins: By and large we agree that we should go along with this plan but we think we should first put the squeeze on the French to get them off their fannies.

Mr. Nitze: We have to realize that the political tools at our disposal in getting the French to achieve results are not as effective as they might be. With a weak French government it is not a simple matter of just telling the French what we think should be done and then expecting that the French would automatically get it done.

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[10] General of the Army Pierre Koenig, Member of the National Assembly; Commander of French Forces in Germany, 1945–1948.

General Vandenberg: In our air force dealings with the French recently we just haven't gotten the impression that the French were acting towards us the way we would expect an Ally to act. I have here a long list which our people have gotten together of ways in which the French have failed to cooperate all over the world. (At this point General Vandenberg read a lengthy list of what he characterized as French failures to assist U.S. air force operations which included such things as French failure to lift troop ceilings for U.S. forces in Morocco, French delays in negotiating air base agreements in various places, French refusal to have certain types of U.S. military personnel in Algeria, French refusal to permit deployment of AC and TAC formations in various places in Africa, French failure to agree on various POL supply facilities, French refusal to supply overhaul facilities in Indochina, etc.)[11] All of these things amount, I think, to a general indictment of the way in which the French are working with us.

Mr. Robertson: What specifically do you propose that we do?

General Vandenberg: I think that State should set up a high level conference with the French at which we would have both political and military people and talk turkey to them about what we think they should do in Indochina.

Mr. Bonsal: What do you have in mind when you say we should talk turkey to them.

General Vandenberg: I think we should tell them what we think is required in the way of leadership and training and in general point out the reservations that we have spelled out in our evaluation of the LeTourneau Plan.

Mr. Bonsal: Can we say to the French that we think Salan and Linares are second-raters?

General Collins: We will have to talk frankly to the French although we may not need to name names. After all, we are pouring a lot of money into Indochina.

Mr. Robertson: One point we haven't discussed is where the money is coming from.

General Vandenberg: I suppose it will come out of MDAP.

Mr. Robertson: I think in view of General Vandenberg's comment that we would be pouring money down a rathole, and since we obviously don't want to pour money down a rathole, we must figure out how best we can realistically carry out the implementation of the Chiefs proposal, that we try to get the French to do the things that the Chiefs think need to be done.

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[11] The list does not accompany the source text.

Ambassador Heath: There is one more problem that I think we should explore. The French say that they can't raise some of their ceilings on personnel or equipment in Indochina because of their obligations in Europe under NATO. What do we feel would be the relative priority of Indochina and NATO if there is a conflict in requirements.

Mr. Nitze: We might put the question even more dramatically by assuming that the French were prepared to send two French Divisions to Indochina. This would obviously conflict with their NATO buildup. What would be your attitude on the question of sending two French Divisions to Indochina?

General Vandenberg: My own opinion is that France is the keystone of NATO. If the French don't get into shape to provide forces that they should provide under NATO, we would have to assess NATO as a failure. I think that while this Indochina situation goes on the French will not be able to get themselves into shape to function as the keystone of NATO, so I think the Indochina thing has to be settled before NATO will work. I personally would send the French Divisions to Indochina.

General Collins: The forces presently available in France are 18-month conscriptees and they wouldn't be worth much in Indochina. The French would have to change their conscription law.

Mr. Nitze: If we were to propose this the French would be, in effect, nationalizing the Indochina war. We would run the risk that the French might prefer to withdraw from Indochina rather than to greatly expand their role in the hostilities.

General Collins: Personally I don't think the French would withdraw.

Mr. Bonsal: Don't we have to consider that if things go on very much longer in the present way we may face the situation in which even without a French decision to withdraw there will be for all practical purposes a necessity for the French to pull out as best they can. The actual French troops in Indochina amount to only some one-eighth of the native forces which oppose them. If the military situation doesn't improve we may find the natives on our side beginning to lose faith in their prospects and eventually joining up with the other side against the French. If that were to happen, the French wouldn't have to make any decision to give up Indochina. The decision would, in effect, have been made for them.

General Ruffner: Might I say that it seems to me that when Letourneau and the French presented their plan it was really more in the form of a justification for the additional equipment and assistance that they were asking for than it was an invitation for us to come into their planning.

Mr. Bonsal: I do think they have given us more of a picture of what they think they are going to try and do than they have in the past. And also, there is Mayer's suggestion to the President that we assign officers to Indochina for strategic and operational studies.

General Collins: Today was the first I had heard of Mayer's statement. If the French really mean this my own feeling would be that we shouldn't send out a new man but that we should expand Trapnell's charter and then give him some staff assistance.

Mr. Nitze: How should we go forward from here?

General Collins: It would seem to me that we can't really go forward until after your Secretary has returned from Paris. Why don't you have a session with your Secretary after he gets back and then we might have a further talk as to how best we should proceed.[12]

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[12] Indochina was considered further at the State–JCS meeting of May 1, particularly the question of influencing the situation through the appointment of a new commander for French forces. The exchange of views was inconclusive. The substance of discussion of the meeting is in State–JCS Meetings, lot 61 D 417.

751G.5/4–2453: Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Paris[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 24, 1953—7:47 p. m.

Tosec 9. At State–JCS meeting April 24 JCS in informal discussion made it clear they attach great weight to reservations they have made as to feasibility and prospects of success of military plan for Indo-China presented by French in Washington.[2] It is apparent Chiefs feel that plan might be "workable" but only if French pursue course of action which would in effect remove basis for JCS reservations. JCS described this course of action as including such things as appointment bold and aggressive French military leader to Indo-China Command, revision French strategy in direction more immediate and telling offensive action, use Vietnamese forces in large rather than small units etc.

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[1] Drafted by Paul H. Nitze, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, and Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] The record of the meeting is printed *supra*.

JCS informally stated belief it was imperative US should forcefully present such ideas to French and that unless French would follow such advice it was possible US aid to French for Indo-China would in fact be wasted.

JCS felt US Government position could only be developed after Secretary's return from NATO meeting and that promptly thereafter it might be wise have joint military and political discussions with French in Paris.

Above JCS views suggest caution in indicating to French now that US approves French military plan.

SMITH

751G.00/4–2553 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 25, 1953—7 p. m.

2003. Repeated information Paris 310, Hanoi 252. President last night, requesting that his information be kept most secret, said that municipal elections of January revealed but scant support for Bao Dai and that it was for this reason that Emperor is so reluctant to see further elections in Vietnam. However, Tam proposes to go ahead with village elections for areas recently restored from Viet Minh control and then intends to hold provincial elections as an essential intermediate step toward national elections, which would have object of returning a constituent assembly.

Tam leaves next week on his tour of provinces (Embtel 1989, April 23, repeated Paris 301).[1] He said that irrespective of Bao Dai's wishes his land reform program was so well launched and had aroused such popular enthusiasm that Emperor would have no choice but to sign necessary decree.

Tam spoke with extreme candor and gave me definite impression that he is feeling less and less under Bao Dai's thumb.

MCCLINTOCK

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[1] Telegram 1989 from Saigon, Apr. 23, not printed, described a conversation between Chargé McClintock and Cheysson, French diplomatic adviser to President Tam. (751G.00/4–2353)

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 152

United States Minutes of United States–United Kingdom–French Meeting, Paris, April 25, 1953[1]

[Extracts]

SECRET

Present: U.S.—Messrs. Dulles, Wilson, Humphrey, Stassen, Aldrich,[2] Dillon, Draper.
U.K.—Messrs. Butler,[3] Lloyd, Alexander,[4] Harvey.
French—MM. Bidault, Pleven, Letourneau, Parodi.

. . . .

Secretary Dulles: . . . The President in his speech[5] next mentioned the end of direct and indirect attacks on Indochina, so that the armies released in Korea will not strike elsewhere. We must recognize that here we are dealing with a more complicated situation, because the conflict in Indochina has not yet fully received the status of an international war or an international act of aggression. In this connection, the Secretary thought it wise if at some appropriate time the French government were to give consideration to the possibility of a complaint being made by Laos or by France, or jointly by both, in the Security Council, about the invasion of Laos. This would give the conflict more international standing and would make it more readily a subject for international negotiation and settlement, which it is not today.

. . . .

Mr. Lloyd: . . . With respect to a complaint to the Security Council by Laos or by France or by both, the British government would follow the wishes of the French government. . . .

. . . .

M. Bidault: . . . As regards Indochina, M. Bidault thought the signal to stop the war would not be given there but elsewhere. In order to make peace, one must first stop fighting. He thought the French position here in line with President Eisenhower's first two points. He could see the advantage of resorting to the UN if all non-Communist countries would vote their condemnation of the invasion of Laos. But recent experience in the UN—in which the French government could only express its thanks to the other two governments—had led it to feel that those fully independent countries (their independence being well illustrated by the unhelpful remarks that have just been made by a sovereign who would have done better to stay with his people in their hour of need) would not be regarded as such by a number of countries represented in the UN. Those countries have up to now followed a policy of working with us on some things while letting themselves be guided by expediency and demagoguery in others. Besides, the consequence may be to encourage material demands, requests and exigencies that involve additional difficulties without adding a single soldier to the forces. Without preventing Laos from taking its own action, therefore, the French government is not encouraging it along those lines.

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[1] For a summary of this meeting as a whole, see telegram 5669 from Paris, Apr. 26, printed in volume v. The extracts from the U.S. minutes printed here constitute the record of discussion on Indochina at this session.

[2] Winthrop W. Aldrich, U.S. Ambassador in the United Kingdom.

[3] R. A. Butler, British Chancellor of the Exchequer.

[4] Field Marshal Earl Alexander, British Minister of Defence.

[5] Reference is to President Eisenhower's "Chance for Peace" speech of Apr. 16; see editorial note, p. 472.

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751G.00/4–2553

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 25, 1953.

Subject: French Attitude Toward Bringing Invasion of Laos before the United Nations.

Participants: The Honorable Henri Bonnet, French Ambassador
M. Millet, Counselor, French Embassy
Ambassador Donald R. Heath
Mr. U. Alexis Johnson
Mr. Philip W. Bonsal

The French Ambassador came in at his request today in order to discuss certain representations which the French Ambassador, Bangkok, has made to the Thai Government. The French Government would like the United States Ambassador in Bangkok to support these representations which have to do with the best movement of supplies, including eventually ammunition, through Thailand to the Franco-Laotian forces defending Laos and also with the evacuation via Thailand of French and Laotian civilians and "notables" who might not be needed for the defense of cities of Laos currently threatened. Mr. Johnson indicated that we would study the request of the French Government. (After the Ambassador's departure, Deptel 2009 was sent to Bangkok authorizing Ambassador Stanton to support the French representations.)[1]

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[1] Telegram 2009 to Bangkok, Apr. 25, is not printed. (751G.00/4–2553) In telegram 2123 from Bangkok, Apr. 28, Ambassador Stanton reported that the hope had been expressed to Thai officials that the French representations would receive favorable consideration. The Thai officials appeared reluctant to accede to the French request for permission to ship supplies through Thailand. (751G.00/4–2853)

In the course of the conversation, the French Ambassador was asked for the views of the French Government regarding the possibility of bringing the invasion of Laos before the UN. The Ambassador said that the possibility had been considered and had been discussed with the Government of Laos. He stated that for the present it was not believed advisable to proceed with an appeal to the UN for the following reasons:

(*a*) An appeal to the UN might encourage Chinese Communist "volunteers" to come to the assistance of the Viet Minh as they had done in the case of Korea when they entered Korea to support the North Koreans. (The Ambassador's reasoning on this point was not very clear; he evidently believes that an internationalizing of the conflict would probably increase the strength of the enemy without any increase of strength on the side of France and the Associated States.)

(*b*) The Ambassador stated that an appeal to the UN would probably encourage a lot of futile discussion of the issue of "colonialism" and would not therefore be particularly helpful in the struggle against Communist aggression in Indochina.

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 152

United States Minutes of United States–French Conversations, Second Session, at the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, April 26, 1953, 3:30 p. m.[1]

[Extracts]

SECRET

Present: French—MM. Bidault, Pleven, Bourges-Maunoury, Alphand and advisers.
U.S.—Messrs. Dulles, Wilson, Humphrey, Stassen, Dillon, Draper, Merchant, Nash, Labouisse, and advisers.

Secretary Dulles opened the discussions by reading the memorandum dated April 26, 1953 on aid to the French Government prepared by the U.S. delegation.[2] He made copies of the memorandum available to the French delegation.

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[1] This meeting dealt with overall aid to France and the proposed European Defense Community as well as with Indochina. The proceedings are further described in telegrams 5672, Apr. 26, and 5679, Apr. 27, from Paris; for texts, see volume v.

[2] The text of the memorandum is contained in telegram 5673 from Paris, Apr. 26; for text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 34–36. The memorandum set forth the dimensions of aid to France contemplated by the United States for fiscal year 1954, including assistance in support of the French effort in Indochina. For documentation on this aid program, see volume vi.

M. Bourges-Maunoury asked, with respect to paragraph 5 (*c*) of the U.S. memo,[3] whether the additional Indochinese effort mentioned therein refers to the program for the additional National Army light battalions already planned.

Secretary Dulles replied that what we have in mind is the program for the increase in the National Armies forces that was discussed by Letourneau when the latter was in Washington recently. The U.S. military people are not, however, wholly satisfied with the French plans that were discussed on that occasion and might have some suggestions to make. The Secretary said that he would ask Mr. Nash to offer any observations he would like to make. The Secretary added that the program for Indochina must be one that can be defended before Congress on the basis of the testimony of our military people, and both the French and ourselves should urge our respective military people to appreciate each other's points of view.

Mr. Nash said that he had participated in the talks with Letourneau in Washington, and that the Defense Department was pleased with the full and frank discussions at that time and with the information that had been furnished by the French, outlining a plan of action. The U.S. military had suggestions to offer regarding the French plan rather than criticisms. The principal point is the matter of tempo. The U.S. military thought that the plan might be accomplished in less than two years if more steam were put behind it. Mr. Nash also said that U.S. military had also called attention to the possible desirability of a more concerted effort in the north to cut the Viet-Minh supply lines. Mr. Nash added that it was not the position of the U.S. military that they could devise a better plan than the one the French had developed. However, the U.S. military would be happy to continue to offer any suggestions that they might have. He added that the plan the French laid out in Washington appears to hold promise of success. He also observed that Letourneau had been informed in Washington that the U.S. would undertake to furnish from FY 1953 funds the equipment needed for the additional light battalions. He referred to the fact that the U.S. military hoped the National Armies could be developed in units bigger than a battalion. He cited the U.S. experience in Korea, and said that as leadership for national units became available and such units were formed, they became more self-confident and effective.

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[3] The text of paragraph 5(*c*) of the memorandum as contained in telegram 5673 from Paris, Apr. 26, read as follows: "Subject further to the adoption by the Fr govt of a satisfactory military program which in all its aspects holds the promise of success in I–C, the US is prepared to provide a portion of a mutually agreed additional Fr effort in I–C, involving especially additional trained forces of the Assoc States. This portion would be of a moderate amount of dollars and subject to specific subsequent agreement before it is to be considered a commitment." (*United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 35–36)

. . . .

Turning to Indochina, Pleven said that soon there would be a considerable change of military command affecting several generals. He wished to stress that no political meaning was to be attached to these changes. The fact is that the climate in Indochina is such that personnel must be rotated, and the generals affected by the forthcoming changes have served the normal tour of 28 months. Secondly, one should not conceal that Indochina places on France difficult and intricate problems. They have been fighting there for seven years. Whenever the economic and financial situation of France is discussed, everyone believes that the Indochina burden is at the root of many of the difficulties. The task of Mr. Letourneau is indeed a difficult one. Pleven also went on to speak of the growing importance of operations in Indochina. If more air transport facilities were available, new moves against Viet-Minh would be possible. It was necessary to appreciate all these matters and to have clear ideas about them, for if the additional effort in Indochina, to which the US had indicated a willingness to contribute a portion, were to require additional French outlays, then insoluble difficulties might be posed.

Pleven went on to say that as regards Indochina, he was struck by the US emphasis on National Armies. This had been a French idea for many years. The French want to use national troops in Indochina. The US experts should realize, however, that French experience has been that such troops are less likely to stand up to the test than others. It is also necessary to train such troops in modern methods, particularly aviation.

M. Bidault said that he had nothing to add to what Pleven had said regarding the burden of Indochina, except to say that the Indochina situation was difficult for some in France to understand. Some of those who want to build up Europe criticize the Government for keeping substantial forces in such a distant place. Others say that Indochina should be abandoned in order to reduce the very heavy French military expenditures. The Government is caught in a cross fire between some on the left who are opposed to the war and some on the right who wish to make economies. He said however the fight in Indochina would go on, with U.S. help and with help of the Associated States. It is the aim of France to build up these states.

. . . .

. . . The Secretary [Dulles] continued that the prospective aid program presented to the French today may not do everything that some in France would like but that it represents a very considerable effort on our part. We must attempt to demonstrate to Congress this year the things the French are doing are important to the whole free world and to the U.S. The program must commend itself to the Congress and the American people. The program is an act of faith. Whether we can communicate this to the Congress and people depends in part on the French—on French plans and especially on the spirit shown in Indochina. A more positive and more dynamic effort in Indochina would be helpful. The Secretary said that Congress supports those who are accomplishing things. Whether the military program outlined for Indochina is feasible, he could not judge, but he would point out that a dynamic approach would make it easier to meet support. He concluded by reasserting our faith in the greatness of the future of France and our desire to help France over the present difficulties. He said he had all possible confidence that the French would make it a welcome task for us to cooperate with them.

751J.00/4–2653 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 26, 1953—10 p. m.

2006. Repeated information Paris (for Secretary) 313, Hanoi unnumbered. Barrage of problems arising from invasion Laos, Cambodian King's *New York Times* interview and tensions in Vietnam as result Viet Minh military initiative has come at time when absence Letourneau has been conducive to rudderless atmosphere in French officialdom similar to that described last paragraph Embtel 1446, January 24 to Department repeated Paris 218 and pouched Hanoi.[1] In this situation there is need for dynamic political action to counteract depressing effect of military withdrawals to infuse a spirit of confidence in Governments of AS, and to produce a sense of progress.

We believe that announcement adoption decrees relative to reorganization French administrative structure in IC affords to French excellent opportunity to make number graceful gestures with view to exploiting what has been publicized as new order in AS.[2] French could well emphasize that reorganization is concrete manifestation confidence in AS Governments and institutions and demonstrate in day to day contacts with peoples AS that new day has indeed come in character of relationship between respective countries. French might publicly announce date for relinquishment Norodom Palace which presumably has been decided in principle (Embtel 1700, February 28 to Department pouched Paris and Hanoi).[3]

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[1] Not printed.

[2] On Apr. 22, it was announced in Paris that the Council of Ministers had decided to appoint three High Commissioners to the three Associated States and a Commissioner-General responsible for defense, economic, and cultural matters with respect to Indochina as a whole. Jean Letourneau, Minister for the Associated States and High Commissioner in Indochina, was designated provisional Commissioner-General. For the decrees on the reorganization of French representation, published on Apr. 27, see *L'Année Politique, 1953*, pp. 574–576.

We understand that Gautier, Risterucci and De Pereyra are leading candidates for position High Commissioner. In fact, Offroy said as much yesterday. It would be psychological mistake to name to High Commissionerships these men who are in eyes of peoples of AS so intimately associated with a regime for which they have deep emotional antipathy. Men who are not handicapped by taint of Colonialism should be appointed.[4]

French military reverses have had a sobering effect on Vietnamese leaders who appear to be more conscious that many props up to now provided by French may be disappearing. We feel that in this situation, French would be well advised quickly to pass on to Vietnamese Government increasing responsibilities.

For its part, the Vietnamese Government, in order to bolster itself for these responsibilities, should take steps to gain increased popular support. Prompt implementation of Tam's plans for agricultural reforms and elections (Embtels 1989 to Department April 23 repeated Paris 301,[5] and 2003 to Department April 25 repeated Paris 310) are steps in right direction.

Reliable French source indicates that many aspects administrative reorganization not yet firm and that genuine changes are being resisted so strongly by vested interests that there is grave possibility no real modifications will ensue. If this were to take place, it would torpedo publicized reorganization and once more justify IC mistrust French *bona fides*.

We suggest Secretary may wish to discuss with French urgent necessity of taking imaginative political action and ascertain what definite steps if any are contemplated by French along these lines.

McClintock

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[3] Not printed.

[4] In telegram 2016 from Saigon, Apr. 27, McClintock stated the following: "Last night Gautier told me that he had been appointed French High Commissioner to Vietnam and that De Pereyra and Risterucci had received similar appointments to Laos and Cambodia.

"Letourneau as expected will for time being become Commissioner General.

"By these appointments French Government has negated political opportunity which formed subject Embtel 2006, April 25 [*26*], repeated Paris 313." (751G.00/4-2753)

[5] See footnote 1, p. 504.

751J.5/4–2753 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, April 27, 1953—1 a. m.

5675. Repeated information Saigon 227. In talking with Secretary Dulles, Mayer expressed reluctance to take Laos case to United Nations Security Council as it might lead to prolonged debate on whole French overseas picture.[1] Secretary pointed out that a unanimous vote in Security Council except for usual Soviet veto would lend international status to Indochina conflict and would enable US to press Soviets for a settlement in Indochina. Mayer agreed to re-study question.

Mayer repeated French request for temporary 30-day loan of four C–119 aircraft and crews to carry heavy equipment into Laos necessary for successful defense. He said project had approval of General Clark but had been turned down by Pentagon which had made counter-offer to loan aircraft and to train French crews to fly them. Crew training time of six weeks was too long according to Mayer. Need was for immediate assistance and six weeks could well be too late. He asked for reconsideration at top level in Washington on urgent basis and Secretary agreed to take matter up Monday while pointing out that use of US crews represented serious policy question for US Government.[2]

DILLON

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[1] This conversation occurred in Paris on Sunday, Apr. 26.

[2] Telegram 5708 from Paris (repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 231), Apr. 28, read as follows:

"At meeting Sunday afternoon with Secretary Wilson and Nash, Pleven again raised question re loan C119s and crews to carry heavy equipment to Laos. Nash replied United States military crews could not be used and said did not believe any United States civilian pilots available who could fly these planes. He stated United States would be prepared train French pilots on C119s now in Germany. On basis advice from USAFE officer, he estimated that best French transport pilots could be trained on C119s in 15 day period. Pleven accepted offer train crews in Germany and asked whether Wilson would request General Clark to make two or three C119s available when French pilots ready. Wilson replied in affirmative." (751J.5/4–2853)

Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, lot 64 D 199

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 27, 1953.

I discussed with Foreign Minister Bidault on Saturday April 25 and with Prime Minister Mayer on Sunday April 26, the question of raising in the Security Council the question of the Communist aggression from Viet Nam against Laos.[2] Both indicated a reluctance to take this step, a reluctance born out of fear that this might precipitate a colonial debate.

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[1] Copies of this memorandum were transmitted to James C. H. Bonbright, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs; Walter S. Robertson, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs; and John D. Hickerson, Assistant Secretary for United Nations Affairs.

I expressed the view that the danger of this in the Security Council might not be as great as in the General Assembly and that it would probably be possible to find out in advance what the result would be in the Security Council, recognizing that Soviet Russia would, presumably, interpose a veto.

I pointed out that it was difficult to treat this Indochinese war as an international matter, perhaps to be discussed between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers, if the French and the Associated States themselves treated it as a purely civil war matter.

I said I had not come to any definitive conclusion but that I felt the matter should be explored.

Both Mayer and Bidault agreed to such exploration and to further exchange of views through diplomatic channels.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

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[2] The question of Laos was discussed during the course of the U.S.-U.K.-France meeting at Paris on Apr. 25; for extracts from the U.S. minutes of that meeting, see p. 505. The discussion on Laos between Secretary Dulles and Premier Mayer of Apr. 26 is described in telegram 5675 from Paris, *supra*.

751G.00/4-2753

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 27, 1953.

At a meeting with the President at the White House this afternoon for the purpose of briefing the President on the recent NATO Paris meeting and bilateral talks with the British and the French, the President asked Secretary Dulles what the French views were on the situation in Laos.

The Secretary replied that the French were very gravely concerned about the situation there. He said that when he had met with Prime Minister Rene Mayer last evening just prior to departure from Paris, M. Mayer had stated that the French needed more urgently the loan of some C-119 aircraft to help them get tanks and heavy equipment into Laos to assist in its defense. Having such equipment might mean the difference between holding and losing Laos. M. Mayer had envisaged U.S. Air Force personnel operating the aircraft during the period of the loan.

The Secretary said to the President that such a procedure would mean the sending of U.S. personnel on combat missions in Indochina. This, obviously, was a decision which would have repercussions and would raise many problems. However, there was an alternative, which would be to loan the French the C–119's, which he understood the Department of Defense was willing to do, and have civilian pilots fly them. Following his return to Washington this morning, the Secretary had made inquiry and had ascertained that there were pilots in Formosa who were not members of the U.S. armed forces and who might well be able to carry out these missions. This possibility was being explored on an urgent basis to see whether it would not be possible to have the aircraft loaned and the above-mentioned personnel in Formosa operate them.

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR II

751J.00/4–2753

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)[1]

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 27, 1953.

Subject: Situation in Laos

Participants: Mr. Robertson—FE
Mr. Bonsal—PSA
Mr. Landon—PSA
Ambassador Sarasin—Thailand

The Thai Ambassador, Mr. Pote Sarasin, called at his request and stated that he had been instructed by his Government to inquire what the United States Government intended to do in connection with the Viet Minh invasion of Laos. He explained that his Government was deeply concerned with the possible threat to Thailand and that in order to formulate its own policy it desired to ascertain U.S. policy.

The Ambassador was informed that this Government regarded the invasion of Laos with deep concern; that we were impressed by French-Laotian determination to resist; that the questions involved of a military and political nature were being studied at the highest levels; that we were studying ways and means of making our help more effective, but that as yet no conclusions had been reached which might be defined at this time and, therefore, it would be more useful to discuss this question again a little later.

Reference was made to United Nations consideration of the problem and the Ambassador was asked what the position of his Government would be in the United Nations. He said that speaking personally and not for his Government he believed that his Government would be prepared to support the Laotian appeal. He hastened to add that he was not certain, however, whether his Government would be prepared to send troops unless, of course, other U.N. troops were first committed.

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[1] Drafted by Kenneth P. Landon, Officer in Charge, Thai and Malayan Affairs.

The Ambassador then described what he believed might be the alternatives for Thailand if Laos fell to the enemy. He believed that, for the time being, there would be no military action across the border; that the next step would be for the enemy to consolidate his position in Laos; that then the enemy would institute various internal economic reforms in order to appeal to the Lao people there and in other areas; that subsequently the enemy would engage in a cold war propaganda program to appeal to the Lao people of northern and northeastern Thailand, of whom there are about five million. He indicated that his Government feared such a sniping campaign might weaken the central Government and attract a substantial part of the population to the Communist cause. He reminisced that this development of a Lao–Thai union of states was along the lines of the plans of the Thai politician, Pridi Phanomyong, who had dreamed of a Thai Republic of States which would make the Lao–Thai people in the Shan States, in China, in Laos and in Thailand aware of one another and lead them to unite in a political entity or union.

The Ambassador reverted to his original question and asked if he might be informed when some firm U.S. policy was formulated in regard to the recent developments in Laos. He was given assurance that he would be so informed.

WALTER S. ROBERTSON

JCS Records, CCS .092 Asia (6-25-48), sec. 40 : Telegram

The Commander in Chief, Pacific (Radford) to the Chief of Naval Operations (Fechteler)[1]

TOP SECRET HONOLULU, April 27, 1953—9 : 30 p.m.

Personal for Fechteler from Radford. The military situation in Indochina is serious.[2] The Viet Minh invasion of Laos has forced the French to deploy their available forces in a defensive pattern which lays them open to defeat in detail and one in which they are almost entirely dependent upon air transportation. With the rainy season coming on they must have sufficient air transportation to take advantage of the good weather breaks to bring in sufficient ammunition, food and equipment to suffice until the next break. With what they now have in the way of air transport and available troops the best they can expect is to hold the strong points they have selected. The worst could be a serious military defeat which would result in the complete loss of Laos with a resultant very bad effect in the politico military situation in Indo China as a whole and in Southeast Asia as well. The proximity of Laos to Thailand must also be considered.

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[1] Copies of this telegram were transmitted to the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[2] Admiral Radford had visited Indochina in late April.

By their boldness the Viet Minh are also gambling heavily and counting on French inability to cut their lines of communications which are long and tenuous. With more good troops and aggressive leadership the French might be able to inflict a serious and almost decisive blow against the Viet Minh regular forces which are committed to this offensive in Laos.

General Salan gave me a detailed briefing in Hanoi.[3] I felt an attitude of complete frankness which has not always been the case. The French High Command is evidently very much concerned.

The military situation in Indo China as it now exists is so fraught with adverse possibilities as far as we are concerned that I feel we must take immediate action within our capabilities to improve it. I therefore recommend that a minimum of 6 C–119 transport aircraft be delivered by air as soon as possible. General Salan has assured me that if civilian pilots, crews and maintenance personnel could be recruited he can arrange to pay them. These aircraft are important because they can transport tanks, armored cars and heavy construction equipment to isolated points in Laos. Tanks and armored cars will help to make up for the deficiency in troops and might well have a decisive effect.

General Salan badly needs more French troops but I doubt that he will ask for them. Actually if France would or could send out ten thousand African troops they might wind up this war within six months. On a governmental level or through NATO we should urge that this be done.

In my opinion there is not time to lose in helping the French out of their present difficulties. I have criticized their leadership and lack of aggressiveness in the past and am not too happy about it now. At this time however we have no choice if we want to save any part of the heavy investment we have already made.

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[3] The briefing received by Admiral Radford from the French High Command on Apr. 26 was summarized in telegram 685 from Hanoi, Apr. 27. (751G.5/4–2754)

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 141st Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, April 28, 1953[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 141st meeting of the National Security Council were the President of the United States, Presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Acting Secretary of Defense; and the Director for Mutual Security. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director of Defense Mobilization;[2] General Vandenberg for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; Mr. Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; Mr. C. D. Jackson, Special Assistant to the President; Major General Wilton B. Persons, USA (Ret.), Special Assistant to the President; Colonel Paul T. Carroll, Military Liaison Officer; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Apr. 29.

There follows a general account of the main positions taken and the chief points made at this meeting.

. . . .

2. *The Situation in Indochina*

The Director of Central Intelligence then briefed the Council on the grave developments of the Vietminh invasion of Laos. The Vietminh forces had advanced so rapidly toward the south that if the French in the delta could be persuaded to take the initiative they might capitalize on the vulnerabilities of an overextended enemy and cut his supply lines. However, the French did not seem inclined to shift from their purely defensive tactics, and there were, therefore, no encouraging developments in the situation. It was also pointed out that there were plenty of supplies from the United States piling up in Saigon, but no Vietnamese troops to make effective use of these supplies, and an absence of will by the native population to fight. Finally, Mr. Dulles pointed out the great anxiety of Thailand over developments of recent days.

General Vandenberg stated that reports from Admiral Radford completely confirmed Mr. Dulles' pessimistic views. According to Admiral Radford there were no indications that the French were doing anything to enlist the support of the population of Vietnam, either to take a hand in the fighting or to improve their political prospects for independence. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, said General Vandenberg, were loath to press the French to adopt a really effective plan, military and political, to meet the crisis in Indochina, but they were convinced that if such a realistic plan were not adopted, further U.S. assistance amounted to pouring money down a rathole. The French commanders in Indochina appeared completely defensive-minded, and General Vandenberg believed that the United States should somehow make clear to the French that unless they formed larger units of native forces and took the offensive against the enemy, further U.S. aid could not be forthcoming.

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[2] Arthur S. Flemming.

General Vandenberg also informed the Council that the French had requested the loan of six C–119 (Flying Boxcars) aircraft, together with pilots to operate them.

. . . .

The President inquired why the French could not provide pilots.

Secretary Dulles said he had discussed the Indochinese problem with the French in Paris only last Sunday. He and his colleagues had attempted to make clear to the French that United States assistance to France in the next fiscal year would be closely related to Indochina, and would have to be conditioned on acceptance by the French of a practical program there and one from which we could see something hopeful. Secretary Dulles thought the French disposed to agree with this position and were on the point of sending out a new crop of generals. They did not wish, however, to interrupt the normal sequence of rotation in this matter.

Secretary Dulles inquired where the C–119 planes were.

General Vandenberg answered that they were in Japan, but that the French thought it would take several weeks to train their own pilots to fly these planes, and accordingly wanted American civilian pilots to operate them.

General Vandenberg then reiterated his fear that no hopeful results would be achieved in Indochina until the French changed their whole attitude.

Secretary Dulles agreed with this conclusion, and the President said that talk as you would, there was really only one military man in France who could really get the Vietnamese to fight with enthusiasm. This was the Governor General of Morocco, General Guillaume. He was the only available first-class fighter, since the French would obviously not send General Juin.

The Council then discussed the President's question as to whether we were in a position to force the French to send General Guillaume to Indochina. At the end of the discussion Secretary Dulles volunteered to raise the question in his forthcoming conversation with Ambassador Bonnet. The President told Secretary Dulles to tell the French Ambassador that such an appointment would go far to revive U.S. confidence in France's determination to achieve results in Indochina.

The Director of Central Intelligence pointed out the desirability of "sanitizing" the C–119 planes before their delivery to the French, and General Vandenberg stated that there would be no difficulty in painting over U.S. insignia.

The President expressed great disappointment over the developments in Laos. Until this invasion he and most other people had imagined that in due course, however slowly, the French would succeed in overcoming their enemies. This confidence had now been shattered. Neither the United States nor the French, said the President, could possibly hold this region by themselves. They must instill a desire to hold in the Vietnamese population.

Expressing agreement with the President, General Vandenberg added that the Vietnamese simply did not think the French honest in their promises for future autonomy for the region.

To this, Secretary Dulles replied that if the French were completely honest they would get out of Indochina, and we certainly didn't want that.

The real point, said the President, was if Laos were lost we were likely to lose the rest of Southeast Asia and Indonesia. The gateway to India, Burma and Thailand would be open. What we had hitherto regarded as a civil war had now come to look like nothing more than France engaged in fighting a traditional colonial war.

The National Security Council:[3]

a. Noted an oral report by the Director of Central Intelligence on the situation in Laos and Thailand.

b. Noted an oral report by General Vandenberg for the Chairman, JCS, of the views of Admiral Radford regarding the situation in Indochina,[4] and the reactions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to the need for a change in the French conduct of the Indochina campaign.

c. Agreed that six sanitized C–119 aircraft should be loaned to the French for urgent use in Indochina.

d. Agreed that the Secretary of State should discuss with the French Ambassador the necessity, from the U.S. point of view, of improving French political and military leadership in Indochina.

Note: The action in *c* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense for implementation. The action in *d* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of State for implementation.

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[3] Points *a–d* and the note below constituted NSC Action No. 773, Apr. 28, 1953. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

[4] See telegram from Radford to Fechteler, Apr. 27, *supra*.

751H.00/4–2753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Japan[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 28, 1953—6 : 39 p. m.

2539. Saigon's 2012 rptd Paris 314, Phnom Penh 84 and Tokyo 65.[2] Please deliver following message to King of Cambodia currently in Tokyo:[3]

"It was an honor and a privilege to discuss with Your Majesty in Washington the problems and aspirations of Your Majesty's Government and I am most grateful for your cordial message from San Francisco.[4]

"I have been fortunate in having Ambassador Heath in Washington to assist me in my study of the problems and aspirations presented by Your Majesty and I believe that, insofar as they concern the relations of Cambodia with the French Union, their solution can be found in the prompt continuance of friendly conversations between the representatives of France and of Your Majesty's Government. The advance of Communist aggression in the neighboring kingdom to the north emphasizes the absolute necessity at this time of continued cooperation in an atmosphere of complete harmony between the authorities and military forces of Cambodia and France if Cambodia's independence is to be preserved and assured. In this cooperative effort of Cambodia and France, the United States is happy to collaborate with its programs of arms aid and economic assistance. We are giving intense study to the possibility of improving and accelerating these aid programs the objective of which is to avoid the enslavement of your people by Communist aggression. Your Majesty's own understanding of the situation and Your Majesty's invaluable contribution to the maintenance of harmonious cooperation will, I know, ensure progress in the desired direction. Accept, Sire, the expression of my highest consideration and respectful best wishes."[5]

Embassy Tokyo will please advise Embassies Saigon and Phnom Penh when message delivered. If King leaves Tokyo prior to delivery of message Embassy Phnom Penh should handle.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA, and Ambassador Donald R. Heath. Repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 2075 (also to be passed to Phnom Penh) and to Paris as telegram 5423.

[2] In the reference telegram, not printed, Chargé McClintock reported that according to French authorities in Phnom Penh, active preparations were underway to launch a rebellion against the French. General Salan, Commander of French Forces in Indochina, had asked McClintock to request Secretary Dulles to intervene with King Norodom Sihanouk. (751H.00/4–2753)

[3] In telegram 3440 from Tokyo, Apr. 29, Ambassador Robert D. Murphy reported that he had delivered the message to the King that day. (751H.00/4–2953)

[4] On his departure from the United States, the King transmitted an expression of appreciation to Secretary Dulles. The text has not been found in Department of State files.

[5] The text of a reply from King Norodom Sihanouk in Tokyo to Secretary Dulles, dated May 2, which set forth the position of the King on French-Cambodian relations, is printed in Cambodia, *Livre Jaune*, I, pp. 100–104. No copy of this communication has been found in Department of State files.

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "French Military Operations in Indochina"

Memorandum by Ambassador Donald R. Heath to the Secretary of State[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 28, 1953.

Subject: Current Situation in Indochina

As of possible interest I am setting down very briefly my views as to the present and prospective situation in Indochina and action which we can and should take towards redressing it.

Military Situation and Prospects

The overrunning of Laos by the Viet Minh is due to the fact that the French High Command, influenced by Letourneau, (1) acted on political rather than on purely military considerations (2) underestimating the ground-covering ability and agility of the Viet Minh. The idea of General Salan and Letourneau was to hold the Thai country in northwestern Viet-Nam and protect Laos against Viet Minh incursions. To that end he immobilized a large proportion of his shock troops in the improvised strong point of Na San and in Lai Chau. Had he not done so, he would have had sufficient striking forces to be in a position to menace the main Viet Minh forces around the Tonkin Delta and would have deterred them from mounting an incursion on the present large scale into Laos. From a purely military standpoint, it would have been better to let the Viet Minh indulge in limited occupation of these areas, tragic as that would have been for Laos, while the French concentrated their troops and operations in Tonkin against the Viet Minh main forces.

The Viet Minh cannot, however, win this war by dispersing their forces and overrunning economically unrewarding Thai country and north Laos—unless the Chinese Communists send troops to help them. As of today, it seems likely that the Viet Minh can capture the hereditary capital of Luang Prabang although there is as yet no certainty that they can take Vientiane, the more important administrative capital of Laos. It seems unlikely both because of supply difficulties and the necessity of keeping the bulk of their forces against the Tonkin Delta that the Viet Minh, unless reinforced by the Chinese, can indefinitely maintain their occupation of northern Laos in their present military strength let alone proceed against Cambodia or Thailand. The problem of the French High Command is then, as soon as feasible to (1) disengage as many troops as it can from Laos and return them to the Tonkin Delta, (2) meanwhile to build up as fast as possible, according to the Letourneau Plan, the Vietnamese National Army and, now, the Laotian National Army, in order to break the present equilibrium of forces to complete the clean-up of the Tonkin Delta and to attack and occupy as soon as possible such strategic areas as the Thanh Hoa Province whose loss would definitely weaken the Viet Minh.

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[1] Transmitted through the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs.

French Military Plans

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have reluctantly accepted the Letourneau Plan for expansion of the Associated States National Armies and after cleaning up south and central Viet-Nam to attack, in 1954–1955 the main forces in the north reducing, according to Letourneau, Viet Minh resistance to "negligible proportions". The Joint Chiefs of Staff would like a faster schedule and larger scale and earlier attacks on the main Viet Minh forces. I suggest that this human impatience for quick results reveals unfamiliarity with the French and Vietnamese forces, as they are and with the actual battle and climatic difficulties they face in Indochina. The plan might indeed be accelerated if the French could find for the High Command someone of the late Marshal deLattre's calibre. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have no candidate to suggest beyond the possibility of General Guillaume who would be tarred as a colonialist because of his administration of Morocco. Even if we had a candidate, we could not force the French to accept him. General Valluy[2] has been mentioned as Salan's successor. If Valluy or whoever takes command fails to exhibit in action the energy, ability and resolution which this military situation requires, then we might some months hence make some discreet suggestions to the French. While we had our doubts as to Salan's ability to handle the military problem, we hardly felt justified in passing on these doubts to the French Government before the present defeat. Salan had previously made a good record in Indochina and had enjoyed the confidence of the late Marshal deLattre.

I see no alternative to approving the "Letourneau Plan" and giving the apparently $800 million for arms and budgetary support which France will need in 1954 to implement it plus an as yet undetermined slice, probably at least half, of the Associated States budget deficit in excess of $230 million which will result from the contemplated expansion of their national armies. But it is far from certain the contemplated expansion of the National Armies will in itself reduce Viet Minh resistance to negligible proportions within two years. We should vigorously support Admiral Radford's recommendation that France send an additional 10–20 thousand troops to Indochina. We are, I understand, supporting his additional recommendation that we lend six C–119s with American civilian pilots to airlift troops and tanks for use in Laos.

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[2] Gen. Jean Valluy, Deputy Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers in Europe; a French military commander in Indochina, 1946–1947.

The Political Situation

Slowing up and indeed gravely imperiling military progress is the lack of a dynamic Vietnamese Government, commanding general popular confidence. Bao Dai, although intelligent and useful as a symbol in bridging the strong north-south friction in Viet-Nam, is not by education or personality, the stuff of which Churchills are made. Tam, the Prime Minister, is dynamic and efficient and a great improvement over his predecessors, but it is doubtful he will be able thoroughly to unite the country because of his personality and candidly pro-French record. Our course is to support Tam and his reform measures morally and through our MSA Programs for the moment, but not, under present circumstances, to follow any of his courses of action which would greatly undermine the prestige or authority of Bao Dai or cause the latter's abdication. Somebody better than Tam must eventually be found, but the successor is not clearly apparent as yet. There are only two Vietnamese now with something approaching national prestige; Ngo Dinh Diem, the Catholic lay leader, self-exiled at present in the United States, and Tri, Governor of North Viet-Nam. Diem seems at present disqualified due to his intransigence, his anti-French stand and his cordially reciprocated dislike of Bao Dai. Tri is a definite possibility. At present we are properly supporting his project for cleaning the Viet Minh out of the Delta through joining scattered hamlets into fortified defensible towns, by the allocation of MSA funds. If he succeeds in his governorship of the north he might then succeed Tam with advantage. At some future date the Embassy might discreetly support him vis-à-vis Bao Dai and the French (to the extent of not incurring the reproach of intervening in internal politics).

Apart from the lack of qualified leadership there is the problem of the profound distrust and dislike of the French. There are certain concessions in their basic accords with the Associated States which the French might well make which might allay although not remove the residual Francophobia in Viet-Nam and Cambodia (there is relatively little feeling among ruling groups of Laos who realize their need of French help). We have been stopped in the past by Letourneau's contention that the French Assembly, voting $1¼ billions a year and seeing French and French Union lives lost in Indochina, was in no mood for any further concessions at this time and that to insist on them would dangerously strengthen the opposition to the continuance of the French effort in Indochina. There are certain gestures and concessions which now, however, I feel the French must and can shortly make without particularly worsening the situation in the French Assembly. At some early date the French should announce that the system of mixed courts for French Union nationals will be reexamined and also the abrogation of the present requirement that legislation affecting French interests as defined in the basic accords with the Associated States shall not apply to French Union nationals until promulgated by the French High Commissioner. I think that in Washington, Paris and Saigon we must persistently and discreetly urge the French to some concession or promise on these points. There are other concessions or gestures which the French can make such as the surrender of Norodom Palace in Saigon to Bao Dai.

Presentation of Aggression Against Laos to Security Council

The advantages of attempting to obtain a Security Council resolution of condemnation of the clear aggression against Laos are well stated in the memorandum for the Secretary prepared by UNA.[3] An immediate effort should be made to persuade France to let a Laotian representative make this presentation in the Security Council. A 7, 8 or 9–2 vote of the Security Council condemning the aggression would have an excellent effect in Laos, of course, and in Viet-Nam. The prestige and hope in the UN among the Vietnamese is very strong and a majority condemnation of the Viet Minh, even if vetoed by the Security Council, should have a great effect in rallying standout nationalists to Bao Dai's side. Whether France can be persuaded to raise the general question of Viet Minh hostilities and Chinese Communist support at this time in the Security Council is doubtful. It should be explored.

I believe, however, if France would make the two concessions mentioned above, that at the next meeting of the General Assembly, she might strongly defend herself against any attack on her record and actions in Indochina which might be made by India, the Arab bloc and any other "anti-colonialist" states.

Cambodia

The situation of Cambodia is distinct from that of Viet-Nam and Laos. In contrast with them it is an ethnically homogeneous nation. In contrast it is, economically and financially, not far from self-sufficiency. Cambodians dislike, because they fear and hate the Vietnamese, the federative monetary and customs union which French influence has placed on the Associated States for their own good. While there have been Viet Minh operations and regional infestation, Cambodia has largely escaped the rigors of war which Viet-Nam, and now Laos, have experienced. The Chinese and Communist menace seems remote and little appreciated. French military defense of Cambodian internal security has not been too successful since the bulk of French Union forces in Indochina have been concentrated in Viet-Nam. To these factors must be added the recent release last year by the French of the 1949 rebel Son Ngoc Thanh and his almost immediate taking to the brush and rebellion again. Thanh's propaganda has been increasingly effective and has diminished the national support, almost veneration enjoyed by the King. This is probably the principal cause—plus inept French handling—of the anti-French outburst of the King in the interview he gave the *New York Times* April 19th. Hitherto the King had been reasonable and appreciative of the necessity of French defense of Indochina.

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[3] The memorandum, "Possible United Nations Action with Respect to Invasion of Laos by Vietminh," was transmitted to the Secretary of State by John D. Hickerson, Assistant Secretary for United Nations Affairs, on Apr. 28. It read in part as follows: "I believe that, on balance, it would be desirable to urge the French to agree to the introduction of the problem in the United Nations. Action there would give the problem an international character, and thus provide a better basis for increased United States aid and the inclusion of Indochina among the list of items subject to international negotiation. United Nations action would also maintain the principle of Free World opposition to aggression." (751G.00/4–2853)

The King is at present waiting it out in Japan until he is assured that the French will make some concessions to his demands. It is almost certain they will do so and our influence must be exerted to that end.

There is a hot-blooded group which would like to see him come into conflict with the French and are ready to launch a rebellion. (Saigon telegram 2029 April 28th).[4]

I believe, however, the Secretary's telegram to the King[5] emphasizing the necessity of harmonious cooperation with the French will have some effect and with some concession forthcoming from the French, the King will follow a reasonable course.

My Personal Plans

I had planned to take some leave before returning to my post since aside from two weeks in 1949 and an occasional day or so off, I have had no leave since 1947.

At FE/PSA's request I have remained on busy consultation since my arrival here March 22nd.

In view of the invasion of Laos I now plan to forego my leave and unless the Department desires me to stay on here a time longer, I will leave Washington around May 10th. I believe it advisable to undergo a medical check-up, which had been arranged for me at Georgetown Hospital, for the period May 2–8 or 9, before returning to a post classified as unhealthful where I have served for nearly three years.

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[4] In telegram 2029 from Saigon, Apr. 28, not printed, Chargé McClintock reported on discussions he conducted with French officials at Phnom Penh that day. The French had expressed the belief that there was an immediate danger of armed revolt against them if King Norodom Sihanouk gave the word. (751H.00/4–2853)

[5] The reference is to telegram 2539 to Tokyo, Apr. 28, p. 520.

330/4–2953 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, April 29, 1953—7 : 10 p. m.

5444. Following up my conversations with Mayer and Bidault please ask Bidault urgently whether French have completed restudy their attitude re introduction Laos question in SC of UN.

In approaching Bidault, convey following as trend US thinking:

1. We see definite advantage introducing Laos problem in UN.

a. It would contribute international status Indochina problem. Thus it would place us in better position press Communists for settlement in Indochina whenever this might be deemed desirable.

b. Emphasizing international character Indochina conflict will achieve greater public understanding for increased assistance to French by US and possibly others (e.g., French request for Thailand facilities, Bangkok's 2123 repeated Paris 8).[2]

c. It would heighten appreciation for necessity France's effort in Indochina and thus help remove its "colonial war" stigma.

d. Vietminh aggression against Laos so clear that opinion US and elsewhere is finding it increasingly difficult understand failure raise this question in UN.

e. Serious risk inaction in UN could be mistaken by Communists as well as by free world as indication weakness and lack concern for SEA.

2. SC appears best UN organ since consideration by it will emphasize danger to international peace and is least subject to pressure for undue extension of debate by extreme anti-colonial group.

3. Case could be brought before SC as "complaint of aggression against Laos" focusing on clear facts of open invasion of Laotian territory as affording best prospect for maximum support in SC and smallest opportunity delay and broadening of debate to cover colonial aspects. Since we anticipate Soviet veto on any SC resolution, problem is obtain broadest, if possible unanimous, support among SC members other than USSR.

4. From viewpoint most favorable reaction among UN members we see definite advantage in Laos appearing as sole complainant party with full support by French.

5. We envisage resolution which would condemn presence in Laos and aggressive activities of foreign forces conducting invasion of Laos, call for withdrawal these forces, call on all states and authorities refrain from giving assistance these forces and to help Laos upon request where appropriate and possible, and call on all states to respect territorial integrity and political independence of Laos.

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[1] Drafted by David H. Popper and Eric Stein of the Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs. Repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 2086, to London as 7111, and to New York for USUN as 411.

[2] Regarding telegram 2123 from Bangkok, Apr. 28, see footnote 1, p. 506.

It would of course be difficult ignore completely question of external assistance to Vietminh which is not limited to Laos, affects all three Associated States and is crux Indochina problem. This question will undoubtedly arise in course of discussion and might lead to suggestion for some type UN or other inquiry. Depending upon effectiveness and persuasiveness presentation Laotian case in SC there may also be pressure for inquiry into facts of Laotian invasion itself. We would have to consider jointly how this problem should be met in SC. However, believe this aspect of problem should not deter us from proceeding with complaint of aggression against Laos.

6. Although accurate prediction vote in SC not possible without consultation with other members, we believe 4 permanent members (UK, US, France, China) would vote for above resolution as would at least 3 non-permanent members (Greece, Colombia, Denmark). At least one of three remaining members (Chile, Lebanon, Pakistan) might also vote for resolution. Since this would be case under Chapter VII of Charter right of France to vote could not be challenged. Soviets virtually certain veto resolution so that SC will not be able take any effective action. However, large vote in SC despite veto would in our view achieve principal advantages outlined above.

We would have to consider what if any further steps UN should take after veto to keep pace with developing situation.

I talked to Bonnet yesterday recommending action in SC by Laos, but did not go into details. Bonnet stated French are afraid matter might get into Assembly and lead to political attacks on France because of its alleged imperialistic policies. Such attacks, he said, might well create a public opinion in France which would force complete withdrawal from Indochina.

We are, of course, aware likelihood matter may arise in GA. However, this possibility exists regardless whether matter raised in SC, and prior initiative in SC would, in our view, set narrower and more manageable framework for any GA consideration.

Please inform Bidault I consider matter one of urgency.

DULLES

751G.11/4–2953 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 29, 1953—7:50 p. m.

2088. Embassy Despatch 429 [2] states Bao Dai requested exchange control authorities transfer eighty million francs his credit France connection his forthcoming trip and describes previous exchange transfers and benefits realized by Bao Dai. Department refers this connection views expressed Deptel 294, Aug 8, 1952. Has not time come for French take firm stand against Bao Dai's financial extravagances which contrast so deplorably with efforts being made by France and US.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Repeated for information to Paris as telegram 5447.

[2] Despatch 429 from Saigon, Apr. 9, titled "French Diplomatic Assessment of Bao Dai," is not printed. (751G.00/4–953)

DULLES

751J.00/4–3053: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, April 30, 1953—10 p. m.
[Received 6:20 p.m.]

5755. Department pass USUN. Repeated information priority Saigon 239, London 1208, USUN New York 57. Re Deptel 5444.[1] I saw Bidault this afternoon and found him opposed to taking Laos case to Security Council. He feels that if the UN were the organization it was supposed to be, the case should naturally go before it, but in view of the strong position of the Arab countries in the UN and their feelings toward France, he could not foresee fair treatment. There would be a demand that Ho Chi Minh be heard and made a party to the dispute which would increase his stature and diminish that of France. Bidault considers that there is now a concern both in France and in the United States amounting almost to panic about the Indochina situation which is not justified by the facts of the situation. These are his personal feelings as government has not made up its mind.

There was long discussion of subject at Cabinet meeting yesterday with no definite conclusion reached. Full report of meeting, including verbatim quotes, appeared in this afternoon's edition of *Le Monde*. This report states Mayer, Auriol and Letourneau favored taking case to UN but that Bidault opposed this course violently. Bidault mentioned article to me and said that description of his opposition and arguments which he used as they appeared in *Le Monde* were accurate. He deplored article and said that information for it had not come from him. This probably accurate as article appears to be form of pressure on Bidault by those wishing to appeal to UN. In closing Bidault said that he hoped to be able to give me an informal memorandum in a few days setting out government position and reasons for it. This indicates that he expects government to reach a decision shortly.

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[1] Dated Apr. 29, p. 526.

I have heard from unofficial sources two additional possible reasons for Bidault's position: First, that taking case to UN would damage prestige of France in French Union, and second, that it would set a precedent for UN to take jurisdiction in Moroccan and Tunisian cases.

Contents of Deptel 5444 also communicated to Latournelle by Minister this morning. Latournelle told him that working level of Foreign Office was now in favor of going to UN but Bidault strongly opposed.

DILLON

751G.00/4–1853 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 30, 1953—6:23 p. m.

2094. Saigon despatch 451[2] indicates high Vietnamese and French authorities are aware extensive trafficking with enemy by Denis Freres and other French firms and adds fact this trafficking will presumably shortly be made public American press. Department profoundly disturbed and nauseated at existence this traffic which in words reference despatch "is known to high officials of the French Government but is winked at".

Department desires Embassy Saigon take this up highest French and Vietnamese levels and urge, in interest of support for enterprise in which we are all engaged, publication news this traffic coincide with news of vigorous, effective and drastic measures by French and Vietnamese authorities stop same.[3] Ambassador Heath concurs.

Dept desires Embassy Paris make similar approach Letourneau.[4]

In addition further facts desired re tonnage and types of material trucked between Haiphong and Hanoi, names of firms involved, etc.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Also sent to Paris as telegram 5453 and repeated to Hanoi as telegram 822.

[2] Despatch 451 from Saigon, Apr. 18, 1953, which reported allegations of illicit trade with the enemy, is not printed. (751G.001/4–1853)

[3] In telegram 704 from Hanoi, May 4, Consul Sturm reported having raised the issue with Lamarque, the Cabinet Director for the French Commissioner in North Vietnam. Lamarque expressed the view that French firms themselves were innocent of trafficking with the Viet Minh, although corrupt employees might be guilty. He stated that in any event, the amount of goods involved was trifling. Sturm told the Department that in his own view, it was unlikely that large French firms would risk dealing with the enemy for small additional profits. (451G.00234/5–453)

[4] In telegram 5759 from Paris, May 2, Ambassador Dillon reported that he had approached Minister Letourneau, who had said that he was unaware of such traffic, but would look into the matter immediately with a view to taking appropriate measures. (751G.00/5–253)

751H.00/4–3053 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, April 30, 1953—10 p. m.
[Received 6:25 p.m.]

5756. Repeated information Saigon 240 pass Phnom Penh 2, Tokyo 47. Bidault also spoke to me this afternoon about Cambodia. He expressed real gratitude and several times asked me to thank Secretary for the message we sent to King in Tokyo. Bidault considers King to be a weakling driven by fear. King now fears the Communists because of their recent advance in Laos, and he also fears the rebel bands in his own country. It is impossible to give King anything in regard to military control, but subject of courts of justice and finances are in course of negotiation, and negotiations will be pushed. Bidault also said that King of Cambodia had raised question of his personal need for money. Bidault obviously has no respect for King or for Cambodian people. He says country would long since have been partitioned by Siam and Vietnam if France had not intervened, and only the presence of France will keep country independent. Negotiations are proceeding, but I do not feel we can expect any very prompt result in view of strong feeling here that King is trying to blackmail France in view their present difficulties with Viet Minh.

DILLON

751J.00/4–3053 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, April 30, 1953—8 p. m.
[Received 9:01 p.m.]

5754. Repeated information Saigon 238, London unnumbered. Letourneau appeared somewhat dispirited during conversation with us today on Cambodian situation[1] and said he was leaving for Saigon Sunday, May 3, although he expected return Paris in event government crisis in May. Press reports indicate yesterday's meeting council ministers devoted largely to Indochina, with differences opinion between ministers on subject bringing Laotian question to United Nations, and spirited discussion Cambodian problems and question Commissioner General Indochina. Following council meeting Letourneau made talk at Anglo-United States Press Club, outlining French policy

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[1] Ambassador Dillon described his discussion with Letourneau on Cambodia in telegram 5742 from Paris, Apr. 30, not printed. (751H.00/4–3053)

Indochina and, in reply queries, explaining there had been exchange views re submission Laotian case to United Nations with United States representatives during recent talks Paris, and that matter still under study.

Added to pressure which Letourneau reportedly faced in council meeting has been publication in *Le Monde* last evening at Servan-Schreiber article, (Embassy despatch 2381, April 30)[2] highly critical of French policy Indochina, which refers to report by recent parliamentary mission to Indochina headed by Devinat in such way that it was clear author had knowledge of report. (Report just concluded and is to be submitted to President, Prime Minister and President of National Assembly next week.) Letourneau himself brought up Servan-Schreiber article, saying it contained implied criticisms of his own integrity and pointing to *Figaro* comment on article this morning that "*Humanité* could not have done better." Letourneau regards article as part of campaign of attack on him and says he is endeavoring to obtain decision regarding new commissioner general and some announcement in this regard prior to his departure, in order prevent his enemies presenting decision as one made without consultation with him. He says Prime Minister prefers civilian commissioner and implies that new civilian commissioner general and new military commander will be named in near future. Letourneau was somewhat bitter over use made of parliamentary mission report, saying that such missions had gone to Indochina each year, that their function was solely to check on expenditures of funds and that such reports never made public and had never before been blown up to such proportions.

Member President Auriol's cabinet today remarked to us that this article was a phase of political in-fighting on domestic scene. He said that debate on Indochina was certain to come when National Assembly reconvenes.

In light of present developments both in Laos and Cambodia, there is likely to be severe questioning by National Assembly of government on its Indochina policy, but it is not yet possible to say how lines will form and to what extent it will constitute danger for government. In any event, those parliamentarians who have long been critical of government policy will not fail to return to attack and this time, in light of Laotian and Cambodian development, they may well have heavier ammunition to fire against government policy than any time in recent past except at time when De Lattre went out to effect amelioration of situation. There are reliable reports that some effort has been made to persuade Juin go out for two months, but that he has so far successfully resisted pressure. At this juncture it would seem necessary that government send to Indochina someone with considerable prestige, both for domestic reasons and for psychological effect in Indochina itself. Under present circumstances there seems to be little or no doubt that, in absence of existing United States aid programs for Indochina and without prospect of increased United States assistance for French effort Indochina, demands for ending such effort by negotiation or withdrawal might well reach serious proportions.

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[2] Despatch 2381 from Paris, Apr. 30, not printed, the daily press summary, described a front page editorial appearing in *Le Monde* on the evening of Apr. 29 by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber titled "Why Are We Fighting?" (951.61/4-3053)

DILLON

751G.00/4–3053 : Telegram

The Ambassador in Thailand (Stanton) to the Department of State

SECRET BANGKOK, April 30, 1953—4 p. m.
[Received May 1—7:02 a.m.]

2146. Department pass Paris. Repeated information Paris 9, Saigon 52, Vientiane, Phnom Penh unnumbered. I called on Prime Minister[1] yesterday and discussed invasion of Laos by Viet-Minh. He said Cabinet has just concluded lengthy review of situation including first, security and defense measures to be taken by Thailand Government and second, French requests for certain accommodations.

With respect first problem he said government had decided close frontier along Mekong River, prohibit exit any persons from Thailand into Laos, and also shipment any merchandise across river. Likewise only persons with identification papers issued by Laos or French authorities would be permitted entry into Thailand from Laos. Prime Minister said joint Thailand military police patrols would be set up immediately along Mekong River to enforce closure of frontiers and check on Laos and Vietnamese inhabitants. He said border patrols would be supported by Royal Thailand Air Force air patrols. Prime Minister said he would visit Nong Khi on Mekong River opposite Vientiane next week and other places in northeast to see that Cabinet decisions were being enforced.

Referring French requests for various accommodations Prime Minister said duly documented refugees from Laos desiring enter Thailand would of course be afforded every courtesy. As to shipment foodstuffs and gasoline through Thailand he said careful consideration would be necessary but added it was not clear from French approach exactly where delivery to French forces across Mekong could be made. In this connection he referred to rapidly advancing Viet-Minh columns on both Vientiane and Paksane. Referring French request mass evacuation 50,000 Vietnamese from northeast provinces, Prime Minister said this physically impossible and sure to arouse violent opposition. He therefore had instructed General Phao, Director General Police to round up as many as possible Viet-Minh leaders in northeast and added Phao would cooperate with French this matter.[3]

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[1] Field Marshal Phibun Pibulsonggram.

Prime Minister commented on failure French bring this clearcut case aggression before UN and inquired whether I thought it would be in order for Thai do so if Laos Government so desired. I pointed out GA now in recess and that to bring matter before SC would not be likely to result in effective action. I added it was my understanding Secretary Dulles had urged French lay matter before UN and that possibly French Government might decide to do so at next session.

Prime Minister deeply concerned over developments in Laos and bewildered by French military tactics asked for my estimate situation. I said it seemed fairly certain invasion Laos part of new aggressive Commie political move aimed at subjugation Southeast Asia. I pointed out that to outflank strong French forces and defenses in North Vietnam and strike at weakly defended Laos and Cambodia was obvious strategy from Commie point of view. I said unlikely Viet-Minh would launch immediate attack on Thailand. Much more likely Commies would consolidate control over major portion Laos under so-called Free Laos Government, then attempt by propaganda, subversive activities and use of "Free Laos" to create unrest Laos and Vietnamese in north and northeastern provinces with view fostering "liberation movement" in these areas. Prime Minister agreed with me Thailand Government capable of coping with subversive efforts this nature but pointed out there was compelling need for vigilance and unity on part of Thailand Government and people.

STANTON

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[3] In telegram 53 from Vientiane, May 5, Chargé David R. Thomson reported that the Laotian Prime Minister, Souvanna Phouma, had asked that the United States exert additional pressure on Thailand to remove Vietnamese from the areas of Thailand adjacent to Laos. The Prime Minister stated that he wanted the Thai Government to know that unless immediate action were taken, the Laotian Government would conclude that Thailand was working with the Viet Minh. (751J.5/5-553)

In telegram 2202 from Bangkok, May 6, Ambassador Stanton stated that Thailand appeared to be making sincere efforts to remove potential Viet Minh adherents from the border area. (751G.00/5-653) In telegram 2161 to Bangkok, May 7, the Department asked Stanton to express thanks to Prime Minister Pibulsonggram for the constructive Thai reaction. (751G.00/5-653)

However, Thomson reported from Vientiane in telegram 71 of May 20 that Souvanna Phouma had expressed disgust with the failure of Thailand to act in the border areas, stating that he had no intention of pursuing negotiations on the matter. (751J.00/5-2053) In telegram 2325 to Saigon (to be passed to Vientiane), repeated to Bangkok, Paris, Manila, Singapore, and Tokyo, May 26, the Department instructed the posts concerned to do everything possible to promote better relations between Laos and Thailand. (751J.00/5-2053)

FE files, lot 55 D 388, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Knight) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 1, 1953.

Subject: Possible French Decision to Withdraw From Indochina

As you know, I have long felt that the continuation of the French effort in Indochina over a period of more than seven years is a combination of a miracle and of tacit conspiracy of silence in France. It has also been my opinion that, had the French foreseen initially that the struggle would be as long as it has been, they would not have undertaken it; likewise, should there occur events at any time which would place Indochina unfavorably over an appreciable period in the French headlines and in the French national consciousness, a decision to withdraw would probably result.

I have frequently compared the situation in France relating to Indochina to a liquid in which chemical parts (of vocal and latent opposition) were in suspension and which could instantaneously be precipitated by a sudden shock or catalyst.

It would seem that the situation as envisioned above is now developing. What with the Laotian invasion, rumors of trouble in Cambodia, successful Viet Minh operations in the Red River Delta, such as the recent coup at Kienan, Indochina has been in the headlines continuously for several weeks and has been forced into the French national consciousness. Barring a radical improvement in the local situation in Indochina, which none of the intelligence which we have received allows us to expect, it is all too likely that the psychological evolution is now taking place in France which could easily result in a decision to pull out, with the resulting loss of other parts of SEA. (I am, of course, fully aware that pulling out is not a simple matter in the case of a large expeditionary corps, particularly when added to the sizeable elements of the population which have cooperated with the French, etc., but I think we must assume that Ho Chi Minh would be all too willing to grant an armistice to permit this withdrawal, which would be the greatest Communist victory in Asia since Mao gained control of the Chinese mainland.)

For the above reasons, it is suggested that we consider additional aid to the French for Indochina as a top-urgent matter as being directly related to a French decision in the foreseeable future either to pull out or to continue the struggle in Indochina.

It is submitted that the time for painstaking analysis of the details of the Letourneau program has passed and has been entirely superseded by the Laotian and the possible impending Cambodian emergencies. This does not mean that we should immediately give the French the full amount requested by Letourneau, but we should make a substantial "advance payment" thereon thus making crystal and symbolically clear to the French Government and people that we stand staunchly by their sides in the face of this turn for the worse.

I believe that this recommended decision should be made virtually immediately if it is to influence favorably the French mental processes before they are too far advanced.

Obviously the above would be merely a stop-gap measure to prevent the worst from happening now through the setting in motion of a chain of events leading to the loss of most of SEA. It does not pretend to deal with the longer range elements needed to insure the possibility of an acceptable conclusion to the Indochina war. Among these elements are the political requirements to increase the sense of participation of the Associated States, to increase the local armies and to use the UN to best advantage.

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations"

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State and the French Ambassador (Bonnet)[1]

[WASHINGTON,] May 2, 1953.

The Secretary telephoned Amb. Bonnet (who was at Warrenton, Va.) and told him that he was planning to issue a statement this afternoon about Laos.[2] The Secretary read the proposed statement to Amb. Bonnet, who commented that it was very good and he thought it would bring a little encouragement to Laos.

The Secretary told him that he hoped his Government would reconsider their position on the U.N. He said that he had had a meeting with several Congressional leaders this morning and they had asked why Laos did not report the matter to the U.N. and the only answer he could give them was that the French were afraid it would provoke a debate on colonialism. He said that the Congressmen were suspicious that there was something wrong there if the French were that afraid.

The Ambassador said that they feel all that they would get from the U.N. anyway is moral help. He said that they were still studying the question, however, and that there would probably be a statement in a few days.

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[1] Drafted by Burnita O'Day of the Office of the Secretary of State.

[2] For the text of the statement issued May 2, see telegram 2116 to Saigon of the same date, *infra*.

751J.5/5-2553: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

WASHINGTON, May 2, 1953—3:04 p.m.

2116. Following is text of statement issued today by Secretary regarding Laos:[2]

Ever since the invasion of Laos began, we have been following developments there with the closest attention and grave concern. Here is another case of ruthless and unprovoked attack upon a country peacefully ruled by a duly constituted government recognized by 35 other nations. When the Communists talk of a Laotian "liberation army", and of "Vietnamese volunteers" they are using the classic Communist phrases which were invented to cloak aggression and which now identify aggression.

We have encouraging reports that the people of Laos are rallying around their King and are cooperating with the forces of the French Union in the defense of their capital. Their efforts are an integral part of the struggle of the entire free world against enslavement and are recognized as such here.

We are maintaining close contact with the Governments of Laos and of France regarding the special requirements of the situation. We have already taken steps to expedite the delivery of critically needed military items to the forces defending Laos.

We are especially concerned at the plight of the Laotian people who have been driven from their homes by the invaders. The MSA Mission in Laos is arranging to be of help to the Laotian Government in the furnishing of the funds and supplies needed to care for these victims of Viet Minh aggression.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Sent to Saigon as telegram 2116 (to be passed to Vientiane), to Paris as telegram 5480, and to Bangkok as telegram 2080.

[2] Department of State Press Release No. 238, May 2.

751G.11/5-253: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, May 2, 1953—7 p.m.

2067. Repeated information Paris 340. I thoroughly concur in principle with last sentence Deptel 2088, April 29 repeated Paris 5447. However at current juncture facing difficulties with King of Cambodia and reluctant King of Laos, I doubt if French could be persuaded to take immediate measures to curb avariciousness of Bao Dai. Furthermore, transfer of 80 million francs has already been accomplished.

There is no one in Indochina in French High Command or Commissariat with whom representations would be effective at present time. Suggest however that Embassy Paris make known in no uncertain terms to Letourneau and Prime Minister our views on this point. Once new Commissioner General is appointed, time might be appropriate to undertake an even more determined *démarche.*

Although automatic argument is constantly proferred that Bao Dai is essential as symbol of Vietnamese unity I think this concept merits re-examination. In my view if we are to get rid of problems posed by Bao Dai, solution is to get rid of Bao Dai himself.

McCLINTOCK

751.56351G/5–253

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Deputy Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Knight)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 2, 1953.

Subject: Possible French Decision to Withdraw from Indochina

I agree with much that you say in your memorandum of May 1 on the above subject.

I should appreciate your judgment of the effect on French thinking regarding Indochina of our conveying to the French Government "the necessity from the US point of view of improving French political and military leadership in Indochina" (NSC Action No. 773) [1] or, in the words of General Vandenberg, to tell the French that they must change by 180 degrees their political and military handling of matters in Indochina. It seems to me that no matter how tactfully this is done, it will produce a feeling of resentment and discouragement which will not help the few people in the French Government who wish to persevere in Indochina and who are already, as you point out, under heavy attack.

I agree with you that what is needed now are evidences of our continuing support. However, I do not know just how that support can be pledged to the French, beyond what has already been done, in the absence of some knowledge of what we will have available in fiscal 1954.

We must consider not only the French frame of mind but that of the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians. Under present circumstances I think that these people as well as the French would be extremely vulnerable to a proposed solution of the Indochina situation on a "democratic" basis the result of which would be to leave civil controls in the hands of whoever controls the armies of Ho Chi Minh, i.e., the Communists.

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[1] For text, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 141st Meeting of the National Security Council, Apr. 28, p. 516.

I think that all the efforts of the French and ourselves at the present time should be devoted to building up as much military strength as possible in Indochina by October 1, 1953 when the new fighting season begins in the north. We and the French should consider added forces from the French Union. Before entirely rejecting the possibility of sending American forces there (perhaps only air) we should face and answer the question of whether the situation can still be saved through the unaided efforts of the French and the Associated States. We cannot afford to cloud our thinking on this subject by insisting on mirages of miraculous transformations of the military and political conduct of the French and their local allies in the next few months.

751J.00/5–353: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, May 3, 1953—5 p. m.

5766. Repeated information priority Saigon 244, London 1210, USUN New York 58. Embtel 5755.[1] I saw Bidault at 7 Sunday [*Saturday*] evening[2] at his request. He asked me to forward to the Secretary his heartfelt thanks for the Secretary's public statement on Laos[3] and for arranging to make available the six C–119s with civilian crews.[4] He then told me that the French Government for reasons given in full in an unsigned memo, translation of which follows by airpouch,[5] did not wish to take the case of Laos to the UN. He stated that Mayer and Auriol were both in full agreement with this decision.

Summary of memo follows:

1. The debate could not be limited and would stray far afield. Many members of the UN like to bring cases against states having overseas

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[1] Dated Apr. 30, p. 528.

[2] Sunday was May 3.

[3] For text, see telegram 2116 to Saigon, May 2, p. 536.

[4] In telegram 5470 to Paris, May 1, Secretary Dulles directed Ambassador Dillon to pass the following message to Premier Mayer: "My dear Mr. President: Last Sunday [Apr. 26] you mentioned your need for C–119 aircraft in Indochina. I looked into this matter immediately upon my return to Washington and I am now pleased to inform you that we have been able to overcome the difficulties which I had told you about. Six of these aircraft will be made available with arrangements for civilian pilots to operate them until French military pilots can be trained. The details of the arrangements will be worked out between your military authorities and our Military Assistance Advisory Groups in Paris and Saigon." (751G.5/5–153)

Telegram 5457 to Paris, Apr. 30, indicated that Assistant Secretary of State Robertson had advised French Ambassador Bonnet of this decision on Apr. 30. (751G.5/4–3053)

[5] The text and translation of the French memorandum were transmitted to Washington in despatch 2397 from Paris, May 4, not printed. (751J.00/6–453)

responsibilities i.e., administration, protection and tutelage. It would not seem desirable to give free rein to this sort of debate on a question that is solely one of security.

2. A condemnation of aggression by a majority of the Security Council that was only obtained with difficulty would be of dubious value.

A later appeal to the Assembly would either not receive a favorable majority or if it did would pose the question of sanctions the imposition of which would raise many problems and could not help but aggravate international tensions in a way that would probably help the Viet Minh. This would be so because it could cause an increase in aid from China, an increase that as in Korea could even lead to open and effective intervention.

3. Soviet opposition to an appeal to the UN on behalf of Laos, would force the Soviets to harden their present foreign policy and take a firm position on Indochina. It would be better not to force them to this course now in the hope that after an armistice in Korea, the Indochina problem could be taken up as part of an over-all Far Eastern settlement.

4. The difficulties mentioned above could be avoided and the same results achieved by the issuance of a declaration by the 16-powers now fighting in Korea. Alternatively this declaration could be made by the 35 powers that have recognized Laos but Bidault foresaw more difficulty in obtaining unanimity from the 35 powers than from the 16 so he is inclined to prefer obtaining the declaration from the 16 powers now fighting in Korea. Suggested wording of declaration follows:

> "We, members of the UN who participate in the action in Korea, approve the efforts which are now being carried on toward the conclusion of an armistice, the first step toward the restoration of peace in the Far East.
>
> We consider however, that this peace is indivisible and we cannot conceal the apprehension (nous ne saurions taire l'apprehension) caused us by the events of which Laos is the victim. Disapproving of this aggression, we affirm our solidarity with Laos, in the struggle, which aided by the forces of the French Union, it is carrying on for the restoration of peace and security on its territory." (*Note:* Suggestion re possible use of 35 powers came from Bidault orally and was not part of memo.)

French Government also suggests that as a practical matter the recommendation of the Honolulu Conference re the establishment of a "staff agency" for Southeast Asia should be immediately implemented and that the question of cooperation with Thailand in the Laos situation should be submitted to this staff agency on a priority basis.

Bidault then repeated with great deliberation and seriousness his own personal feeling that the situation in Laos while of course serious was not as direly serious as many people both in the military and political fields seemed to think.

DILLON

PSA files, lot 54 D 190, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 5, 1953.

Subject: Connection between Korean and Indochina Settlements

In considering the US response to the French refusal to take the matter of aggression in Laos before the UN and their suggestion for a declaration by the 16 nations now fighting in Korea against the Communists, EUR believes that we must clarify our thinking as to our intentions regarding the "interdependence" of the Korean and Indochinese conflicts and their settlement—a clarification that requires early consideration in its own right. The argument to be reiterated that would have the most effect on the French would be that the UN action must be taken so that the Indochina war would have status enabling its international negotiation. The implications of an approach to the UN powers would also require clarification in our own minds of this "interdependence" and what the US intends to do about it.

The principal ray of light in a most discouraging situation which the French see and therefore which perhaps is likely to be the main factor contributing to their willingness to continue efforts in Indochina is the possibility that through some connection between peace talks in Korea and the war in Indochina an honorable settlement of the Indochina war might be achieved. At any moment that it may become clear that hostilities have ceased in Korea and that they may indefinitely continue in Indochina, even without open Chinese intervention, it is quite likely that the French would decide to "throw in the sponge" by the initiation of separate negotiations with Ho Chi Minh with a view to insuring their evacuation.

We have made statements during the past few months that have become more and more specific and which the French would interpret as a commitment:

1. In the State of the Union Message[2] President Eisenhower stated:

> "In this general discussion of our foreign policy, I must make special mention of the war in Korea.
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> "This war is, for Americans, the most painful phase of Communist aggression throughout the world. It is clearly a *part of the same calculated assault that the aggressor is simultaneously press-*

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[1] Drafted by Ridgway B. Knight, Deputy Director, and William D. Fisher of the Office of Western European Affairs.

[2] For information on the President's State of the Union Message, Feb. 2, 1953, see editorial note, p. 376.

ing in Indochina and in Malaya, and of the strategic situation that manifestly embraces the island of Formosa and the Chinese Nationalist forces there. The working out of any military solution to the Korean war will inevitably affect all these areas."

2. The communiqué issued after the talks with Prime Minister Mayer included the following:

[Here follows the extract of the Communiqué of March 28, 1953, printed on page 436.]

3. Lastly, the President's message of April 16[3] specified that:

> "The first great step along this way must be the conclusion of honorable armistice in Korea.
>
> "This means the immediate cessation of hostilities and the prompt initiation of political discussions leading to the holding of free elections in a united Korea.
>
> "*It should mean—no less importantly—an end to the direct and indirect attacks upon the security of Indochina and Malaya. For any armistice in Korea that merely released aggressive armies to attack elsewhere would be a fraud.*
>
> "*We seek, throughout Asia as throughout the world, a peace that is true and total.*"

If Korea and Indochina are not linked immediately at least in US Government positions, it may be for all practical purposes useless to do so subsequently. If there should be an armistice which would be followed by discussions limited to a political settlement for Korea and not including a general Far Eastern settlement the Chinese during the period of discussions could be freed to intervene with "volunteers" in the Indochinese theater and in a few weeks achieve a *fait accompli* with *de facto* Red occupation of Indochina except possibly for French pockets at Hanoi, Haiphong and Saigon.

One of the main difficulties facing us in linking immediately Indochina with Korea in any negotiation involving the UN would be the extreme reluctance of a majority of members of the UN to do so. While the factors that influence this majority would widely differ they would, nevertheless, represent compelling reasons:

The Arab–Asian bloc would be adverse to intervening in a "colonial war" and could be expected to object to "pulling French chestnuts out of the fire"; furthermore public opinion in the majority of the nations participating in the fighting in Korea (in particular in the US) would be gravely concerned about the introduction of any additional problem which could prolong the fighting in Korea.

Because of the situation outlined above, we should make up our minds just as soon as possible concerning the following:

1. How do we propose to implement the statements which we have made concerning the "interdependence" between the struggles in Korea and in Indochina?

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[3] For information on the President's "Chance for Peace" speech of Apr. 16, 1953, see editorial note, p. 472.

2. If we think the Indochinese situation should be introduced into possible future UN talks on Korea, when should this take place. Before the armistice, after the armistice, or precisely at what stage?

Assuming we have reached a decision on the above general principles we should decide:

a. With whom in the UN and how would we go about obtaining agreement for our point of view?

b. Should we not make clear to the French that Indochina must be formally put before the UN before we can attempt the above?

c. When and where do we discuss this with the French: Paris, Washington, New York, or a combination of the above?

d. What kind of a "political solution" do we envisage for Indochina? Thoughts on this will be the subject of a separate memorandum.[4]

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[4] Reference is to the memorandum from Knight to Merchant of May 6; for text, see p. 544.

Editorial Note

On May 5, 1953, President Eisenhower transmitted a message to Congress outlining the recommendations of the Administration for the Mutual Security Program of fiscal year 1954. The message included the following statement: "We are proposing to make substantial additional resources available to assist the French and the Associated States in their military efforts to defeat the Communist Viet Minh aggression." For full text of the message, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*, pages 256–259, or Department of State *Bulletin*, May 25, 1953, pages 735–736.

Secretary of State Dulles testified in support of the proposed Mutual Security Program for 1954 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee on May 5. His statement included the following remarks regarding Indochina: "Communist aggression in Indochina represents one of the most serious present threats to the free world. The present aggression against Laos is an extremely disturbing development. The primary responsibility for conduct of military operations rests upon France and the Associated States. Their manpower must do the fighting and they are bearing a large part of the costs of the military effort. But they are clearly incapable of bearing the entire cost. Our mutual-security program provides $400 million and some military end items for the purpose of helping the French and the Indochinese peoples reduce this Communist pressure to manageable proportions. There may be some modest increase in aid of new and more vigorous plans." For full text of the statement (Press Release No. 241, May 5), see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 25, 1953, pages 736–739.

Harold E. Stassen, the Director for Mutual Security, also testified on May 5. His statement indicated that under the proposed program, $400 million was allocated for support of the war effort in Indochina, and that for France approximately 40 percent of the cost of the war would be covered by contributions in various forms from the United States. For full text, see *ibid.*, pages 740–742.

For documentation on the development of the Mutual Security Program for 1954 and Congressional action on it, including information on aid for Indochina, see volume I.

751J.00/5–353 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, May 6, 1953—6 : 44 p. m.

5517. 1. I am disappointed French Govt has concluded (Embtel 5766 sent Saigon 244, London 1210, USUN 58)[2] it does not wish take case Laos to UN. Without minimizing risks and potential problems French might face, it has seemed to us that on balance advantages to France, Laos and free world favor submission UN. It has seemed to US likely that in any event one or more aspects Indo-China situation will eventually come to agenda SC or GA on initiative others. This may be in less manageable context than if Laos now took initiative with French backing since invasion offers best opportunity present French case. With lapse time clear-cut issue aggression likely become clouded with implications domestic revolt through propaganda blow-up fictitious "free" Laotian Government.

2. Bidault suggestion for declaration by group of 35 or 16 powers raises following problems: (a) Collective declaration by large number states predominantly or exclusively UN members would bring into even sharper relief failure raise in UN what is branded as clear case of aggression obviously calling for UN consideration. (b) Broadest support for declaration would be essential. Unanimous support would be indispensable in group of 16. We have good reason believe significant number states could not be induced join, not because of difference of view as to existence aggression, but because fear involvement in commitment on Indochina whose consequences they could not foresee, and because feeling UN itself proper vehicle for consideration.

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[1] Drafted by Eric Stein, Acting Officer in Charge, Pacific Settlement Affairs, (UNP), and Ward P. Allen, United Nations Adviser in the Bureau of European Affairs. Repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 2155, to London as 7227, and to USUN at New York as 424.

[2] Dated May 3, p. 538.

(c) Neither group includes in its membership certain important Asian nations with interests in area. These nations, well as some members of group of 16, might believe issuance declaration by 16 would carry undesirable implication these countries have become self-appointed security police Far Eastern area.

3. Emb Paris discuss matter with FonOff.[3] Emb London do same and report reactions.

DULLES

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[3] In telegram 5857 from Paris, May 7, Ambassador Dillon reported having discussed the issue with Maurice Schumann, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Schumann stated that the French Government was more convinced than ever that the case of Laos should not be brought before the United Nations at that time. He expressed the hope that French alternative proposals would receive further consideration. (751J.00/5–753)

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "French Military Operations in Indochina"

Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Knight) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 6, 1953.

Subject: Negotiated Settlement in Indochina

In accordance with your request at a recent Director's meeting, I am putting down some preliminary thoughts concerning a negotiated settlement in Indochina.

First, and even though this is not the point to which I wish to address myself, mention should be made of the difficulties which we will encounter in seeking to bring the "other side" to the conference table. Quite obviously Ho Chi Minh would not fully represent the "other side", but the Chinese Communists as well as the Soviets can, without doubt, be expected to disclaim any knowledge of or responsibility for the situation in Indochina, "a purely internal affair."

Quite aside, however, from the above difficulties and assuming for the purpose of the argument that they have been overcome, it is difficult to visualize what would be the terms of reference which we would suggest for the political discussion of Indochina. From the start we should realize that the Communists would insist on at least the withdrawal of foreign forces and a plebiscite thereafter.

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[1] On May 6, Knight transmitted copies of this memorandum to Counselor Douglas MacArthur II and to Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA, with the following note:

"I am sending to you herewith some preliminary thoughts concerning the difficult problem of a political solution to the Indochina war.

"This is a very rough memorandum for which I request your indulgence. Any and all comments will be deeply appreciated." (PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "French Military Operations in Indochina")

1. A plebiscite under present conditions could with certainty be predicted as giving a thumping majority to the Viet-minh in Viet Nam. Under normal conditions it could be expected that Laos and Cambodia would vote anti-communist with a large margin. However, both these people have been long known for their peaceful characteristics bordering on timorousness. What with the recent aggression in Laos by the Communists from Viet Nam on top of a general current of victory running for the Viet Minh, it is to be feared that a plebiscite in these two other countries would also result in Communist victories.

2. Another possibility which presents itself would be a cessation of hostilities on the basis of the military *status quo* with both sides resting on their positions and negotiations between the Ho Chi Minh–Bao Dai Governments. As we all know, the situation is radically different from that prevailing in Korea where there exists a continuous battle line with both sides in effective control of all the territory on their side of the line. In Indochina, on the contrary, the picture is one of an infinite series of pockets and pockets within pockets. Because of this complex and confused situation it is difficult to imagine that the Viet Minh would refrain from political consolidation and expansion during the talks.

The probable outcome of these negotiations would be the creation of two Viet Namese states—one Communist and the other non-Communist. After complicated exchanges of territories there would result in all probability a Communist Viet Nam in the North and a Bao Dai Viet Nam in the South. This state of affairs, however, could not be expected long to endure what with the greater dynamics of the Communist elements in Viet Nam coupled with the half-heartedness of Bao Dai and his Government. It is believed that it would not be long until the Southern Viet Nam state would have been subverted by the Communists with the result that all of Viet Nam would be Communist. A chain of events leading to Communist domination over most of Southeast Asia could well have been thus set in motion.

After having given some thought to the above possibilities and variations thereof (obviously it would be a loss of time to consider a return to the *status quo ante-bellum*, because of public opinion in the Associated States, as well as because of the Viet Minh's inflexible opposition thereto), I am tentatively tempted to conclude that the following would offer us something which might be accepted by both sides and yet not lead inevitably to eventual Communist control over all of Indochina.

3. Essentially this suggested situation is a variation of the second hypothesis above. There would be two Viet Nam states with this important proviso that most of the French forces in Indochina would remain for a long period in the Southern state. At the same time, the

French would have to agree to encouraging and fostering to a greater extent than heretofore the full autonomy of this state so that it would acquire in a matter of years enough national consistency to resist subversion from the North. To make this solution politically acceptable to the French, such a state could remain within the French Union but this should be much more on the basis of British Dominion status than has been contemplated so far. While the Indochina war is unpopular in France, it is believed that stationing of forces there for a long period of time should be politically possible as long as the drain in blood would have been stopped and the financial burden greatly decreased. A similar arrangement could be worked out for Cambodia. Unfortunately, it is difficult to see how the same could be done for Laos not only because it is now in part overrun by the Communists but also because of its exposed strategic position and weak defense potential, which might make it a permanent liability. At best it would seem that we could only hope for a divided Laotian state or else for the integration of southern Laos into Cambodia. While thus Siam would have a rather long common border with the northern Indochinese Communist state or states, it is believed that as long as a solid non-Communist entity would remain to the east of Siam, Communist intervention therein would not be inevitable.

We should have no illusion that anything much better than the foregoing could be developed in negotiations with the Communists concerning a "political settlement" in the Far East unless a vast improvement in the situation in Indochina is achieved through military operations exceeding those presently envisaged. Whether the foregoing would be acceptable would also depend to a large extent upon what might be considered an acceptable settlement for Korea.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 143d Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, May 6, 1953[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 143rd meeting of the National Security Council were the President of the United States, Presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Under Secretary of State; the Secretary of

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on May 7.

Defense; the Deputy Director for Mutual Security. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director of Defense Mobilization; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Acting Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission; Commissioner Thomas E. Murray, AEC; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; Mr. Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; Mr. Lewis L. Strauss, Special Assistant to the President; Mr. C. D. Jackson, Special Assistant to the President; Colonel Paul T. Carroll, Military Liaison Officer; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a general account of the main positions taken and the chief points made at this meeting.

. . . .

2. *The Situation in Indochina and Thailand*[2]

The Director of Central Intelligence stated that the latest reports on the situation in Laos were slightly more optimistic, though the situation was far from clear. The rainy season would commence within a week or ten days, and would probably put an end to the fighting until next autumn.

On the political side, continued Mr. Dulles, the recent statements and actions of the King of Cambodia were the most significant developments. The King had bluntly stated that the French must give Cambodia virtually complete independence if they expected the Cambodians to assist in resisting the Vietminh invaders.

. . . .

The President asked for a clear statement as to the position being taken by the French on this whole business. What, exactly, he asked, does France have in store for the Associated States of Indochina in the future?

Mr. Dulles answered that the French were offering these States independence within the French Union after internal security had been established. Unfortunately, the governments of the Associated States had little confidence in the sincerity of the French commitment.

The President expressed the firm belief that two, and only two, developments would really save the situation in French Indochina. The first of these was a firm official statement by France as to the future independence of the Associated States when the internal conflict was over. Even if the French were obliged to contemplate losing political control of Indochina in these circumstances, the President believed that they would continue to secure considerable economic advantage. The second requirement, said the President, was simply for a leader. Most of the French Generals sent out to Indochina struck the President as a poor lot, and he had already told Secretary Dulles to apply what pressure he could to secure the appointment of General Guillaume. The President then added that General[3] had visited him the other day, and that he had been well impressed with the General's realistic appraisal of the situation in Indochina, as well as with his apparent capacity for real leadership. He therefore planned to write Ambassador Dillon to urge support for the appointment of[3] to head the military effort of the French in Indochina.

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[2] For the text of the portion of this memorandum which deals with Thailand, see volume XII.

Secretary Humphrey observed that he and his colleagues had discussed this whole problem of Indochina with Bidault and the other French leaders at the NATO conference. The French leaders seemed straightforward in their assertion of France's ultimate intention to free the Associated States. But Secretary Humphrey said that he detected among officials in the lower echelons a desire to perpetuate the colonial status of French Indochina.

The President replied that unless something could be done to change this latter feeling, nothing could possibly save Indochina, and that continued United States assistance would amount to pouring our money down a rathole.

The Vice President remarked that he had met the King of Cambodia during the latter's recent visit to Washington. The King had made the point that in China, Communism had secured a foothold because of its appeal to the poor against the great landholders. In Cambodia, however, the appeal of the Communists was not economic but nationalist. The dilemma which confronts us in Indochina seemed to the Vice President to boil down to the fact that the native peoples were unwilling to fight Communism in order to perpetuate French colonialism.

As on other occasions, the President reminded the Council of the touchiness of France in any matter, such as this, which affected her prestige as a world power. The President sympathized with and understood France's sensitivity, but believed that if the French really desired to cut the best figure before the world, the obvious course to pursue was first to defeat the Vietminh forces and then magnanimously to offer independence to the Associated States. The great question was how we can make the French see the wisdom of such a course of action.

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[3] The following omission in the source text.

Secretaries Smith and Humphrey both noted that the French were frightened lest, after granting full political independence to these States, they would switch their trade patterns from France to Japan.

Mr. Cutler then pointed out to the Council that existing policy with respect to Indochina was not responsive to the actual situation which had developed. Our existing policy on Indochina contemplated intervention by the United States only in the event of overt or covert Chinese intervention to assist the rebels. In point of fact, such Chinese intervention had not occurred, and the deteriorating situation had been brought about by civil war. Mr. Cutler also pointed out that in NSC 149/2[4] intervention in Southeast Asia had been contemplated if "a basic change" in the situation occurred. Therefore, he added, the question before the Council was whether recent developments in Laos amounted to basic change, and therefore whether the United States was prepared to contemplate military intervention.

. . . .

The National Security Council:[5]

a. Noted an oral briefing by the Director of Central Intelligence on the situation in Laos and Thailand.

b. Agreed that it was essential that the French make clear that they intend to give the people of the Associated States maximum freedom to choose their own form of government, as soon as internal security can be established in Indochina.

c. Agreed to recommend to the President:

(1) The provision, as a matter of urgency, of a military mission to Thailand, headed by a high-ranking U.S. officer, to give training and operational advice to the Thai armed forces along the lines of the Van Fleet mission to Greece.

(2) Acceleration of military assistance to Thailand to furnish all feasible matériel aid to the Thai armed forces.

d. Agreed that Mr. C. D. Jackson should report at the next Council meeting on the possibilities for psychological operations based on Thailand.

Note: The action in *b* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of State for implementation. The action in *c* above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense for implementation.

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[4] For text of NSC 149/2, "Basic National Security Policies and Programs in Relation to Their Costs," Apr. 29, 1953, and related documentation, see volume II.

[5] Points *a–d* and the note below constituted NSC Action No. 780, May 6, 1953. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

751G.00/5–753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, May 7, 1953—12:11 p. m.

5522. Eyes only. For the Ambassador from the Secretary. The President has drafted the following message to you in the thought that you may find it useful. I fully concur with what he says.

"PERSONAL May 6, 1953.

"Dear Mr. Ambassador: The situation in Indo-China continues to be one of grave concern to all who are striving to increase the strength and stability of the free world. To the people of the United States, conditions there seem to be worsening rather than improving, despite our outlays for material support.

"After much thought on this subject, my associates and I have arrived at two convictions, a knowledge of which may be of some value to you in your contacts with French officials.

"The first is that an outstanding leader is needed, empowered with the means and authority to win victory—a man who is at once eminently qualified in the training and organization of military forces, and who is at the same time *a forceful and inspirational leader.* With such leadership in the person of the late Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny, French Union forces made extensive progress against the insurgents and I believe the progress would have been maintained had this outstanding soldier lived.

"The second requirement, as I see it, is for a clear and unequivocal public announcement on the part of the French Government, repeated as often as many appear desirable, that France seeks self-rule for Indo-China and that practical political freedom will be an accomplished fact as soon as victory against the Communists is won. France would, thereafter, have such relationships with the peoples of Indo-China as are agreed between the two peoples to be of mutual benefit. Such a declaration would place this tragic conflict in an appealing perspective and win millions of friends for France, not only in Indo-China but throughout the world. A short time ago, I mentioned to our State Department my views as to the urgent requirement for a top-flight commander in Indo-China. I specifically referred to General Guillaume as the type of man capable of providing the leadership required. Yesterday I had the pleasure of seeing Lieutenant General Jean E. Valluy. I understand that he is receiving consideration for appointment as Commander in French Indo-China. Based on my personal impression of him, and on reports reaching me of his work at SHAPE, I feel that General Valluy may well be the man who can perform this critical task successfully. If such be the decision of the

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[1] This telegram, containing a message drafted by President Eisenhower, was prepared by Roderic L. O'Connor, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State.

French authorities, I strongly urge that he be sent as early as practicable and that he be given powers and support equal to the great task that will be his.

"With warm personal regard,

Sincerely, Dwight D. Eisenhower"

DULLES

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 154

United States Minutes of Meeting at the White House, May 7, 1953, 12:15 p. m.[1]

SECRET

PARTICIPANTS

U.S.	CANADIAN
President Eisenhower	Canadian Prime Minister
Secretary of State	Secretary of State for External Affairs Pearson
Assistant Secretary of Defense Nash	Canadian Ambassador Hume Wrong
Assistant Secretary of State Merchant	

[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

The President stated that the situation in Laos gives pause and in many respects poses a more serious threat than Korea. He said that whereas the public has an instinctive desire to win the war in Korea he knows of no responsible US official who wants to risk extending hostilities and added that for the moment the wisest course to pursue is that which we are now following and that we should explore to the last corner the possibility of genuine Soviet intentions to reduce tension, though he had no thought that there was any permanent change in the long-term objectives of the Soviet. He remarked that in 1945 Stalin had told him of the need for internal relaxation from the sustained war effort and suggested that possibly the new Soviet leadership believed that relaxation of internal tensions was necessary.

The Secretary of State agreed that the Russians were no doubt encountering difficulty in adjusting their internal machinery to Stalin's death. He noted that the Russians might calculate that an Armistice in Korea might well sow seeds of division among the Western nations. He went on to say that the development in Laos was disturbing and that he had talked twice in the last two days to the Thai Ambassador. The Thais are concerned and anxious to ask the Security Council to study the situation, a project in which he saw certain advantages. Secretary Dulles then described briefly the situation in Thailand and South East Asia in general.

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[1] Louis S. St. Laurent, the Prime Minister of Canada, visited Washington on May 7 and 8. For additional documentation on the conversations which occurred during his visit, see volume VI.

Secretary Pearson asked if he considered favorably the proposed creation of a Peace Observation Group.

The Secretary of State replied that he was considering such a proposal which seemed to him suited to the situation and noted that the idea had originated with him in the General Assembly of 1950.

Secretary Pearson commented that the French were trying to create the impression that Indochina and Korea were two facets of the same front. Whereas he agreed that militarily they might be, he doubted that this was the case politically since one was a UN operation and the other had some of the characteristics of a quasi-colonial situation.

The President at this point interjected that the French should make an unequivocal declaration of their intentions with respect to the Associated States after the conclusion of military operations. He expressed the belief that the only chance of preserving South East Asia lay in making sure of the support of the native peoples. He went on that regulars can't win against guerrillas who have indigenous support and added that many years ago that fact was proved in the case of General Braddock. He added that his impression was that the Vietnamese were in part indifferent to the struggle and got some enjoyment from seeing the French kicked around. He also thought the French should send an outstanding military commander who could inspire the effort as de Lattre had and concurrently the French should announce to the world their post hostilities intentions.

The Secretary of State remarked that we have been pressing the French to let Laos raise the issue of aggression in the UN, that he had discussed it in forceful terms in Paris but that the French were reluctant possibly being fearful that they thereby might be forced into making a declaration of broad commitment.

There were some further exchanges in which there seemed to be agreement that time was lacking for gradualism in Indochina and that the French should not take counsel of their fears over the effects elsewhere in their empire of a forthright political declaration with regard to Indochina.

[Here follows discussion of other subjects.]

751G.00/5-753

Memorandum of Conversation, by Edmund A. Gullion of the Policy Planning Staff

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 7, 1953.

Subject: Discussion of Indochina

Participants: Mr. Justice W. O. Douglas
Senator Mansfield, Ohio [*Montana*]
Senator Kennedy, Massachusetts [1]
Mr. Newton, American Friends Service Committee
Mr. Costello, Columbia Broadcasting System
Mr. Edmund Gullion, Dept. of State
Mr. Gene Gregory, Dept. of State
[Name deleted]
M. Ngo Dinh Diem, Catholic Vietnamese Nationalist leader.

The above were present at a luncheon at the Supreme Court Building arranged by Mr. Justice Douglas. During lunch and for about an hour afterwards, [name deleted] and Mr. Diem discoursed on Indochina and answered questions, chiefly from Mr. Douglas and Senator Kennedy.

In general, Mr. Diem believes that nothing less than an immediate promise of Dominion status will satisfy the Vietnamese populations that they have something to fight for in Indochina. He and [name deleted] believe that the French are now showing a tendency to grant more concessions but that these are "too little and too late". (Diem used the English phrase.) Diem insisted particularly and at length on the character of the French Union and its governing bodies in which Associated States sovereignty was specifically circumscribed.

. . . .

Diem took a less charitable view of Ho Chi Minh. He thought there could be no liberty under the Communists. He did not believe that Ho

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[1] On May 7, 1953, Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts addressed a letter to Secretary of State Dulles concerning Indochina. Senator Kennedy expressed concern regarding the deterioration of the situation. Contending that the French had not succeeded in mobilizing the support of the native population to any significant degree, he stated that "the American people want in exchange for their assistance the establishment of conditions that will make success a prospect and not defeat inevitable." He enclosed a list of 47 questions on the situation. Thruston B. Morton, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, replied to the Senator on May 13 with regard to the general outlines of U.S. policy toward Indochina. By letter of June 12, 1953, the Assistant Secretary responded to the 47 specific questions. This unclassified correspondence is in file 751G.00/5-753.

Chi Minh was free to make decisions and he was not even sure that he was alive. The trouble in Vietnam was, he said, that there was no rallying point in between the Communists and the French. In response to questions, he said the Vietnamese still needed French troops. If they were withdrawn, the Vietnamese could not look forward to any liberty under Communist domination, but the fault would be attributable to the Franco-Bao Dai regime, which had balked at building up an army or government and would leave nothing behind which could offer the Vietnamese real protection and sovereignty.

Diem recounted his relations with Ho Chi Minh: In 1946, Ho Chi Minh had "isolated" Diem in a tribal mountain village. After six months, he asked him to join his government. Diem says he told Ho Chi Minh that since he knew Ho was a Communist, he would require assurance that he would be privy to all decisions and get full information. The Vietnamese people did not want Communist control. Diem's supporters required that Diem be given the Interior Ministry and charge of Police in the Ho Chi Minh Government. Ho hesitated before this request for some weeks, but on the advice of his colleagues, eventually refused.

Both Vietnamese at the luncheon expressed a poor opinion of Bao Dai, who they thought had little influence or respect. Premier Tam was "honest", but he had very little popularity, he was a "Frenchman" and as a Southerner, he had little credit in the North.

In response to questions, Diem said that he expected to go to France shortly where he would find understanding among some French groups, who had begun to be puzzled and resentful of France's failures in Indochina. Once in France, however, he was not sure that he could get an exit visa for Vietnam. The Communists had sworn to assassinate him in Vietnam, but he was equally aware that many others would like to be rid of him. He denied that this was his reason for staying away; what he lacked was a platform of any political context in which he could do useful work for his country.

He thought that the French military understood the problem better than the French civil Government. In any case, the French could not beat the Communists and would have to rely on the Vietnamese to do it. They could not get the Vietnamese to undertake the task, however, unless the Viets had more freedom.

Both men expressed admiration of the declaration recently made by the King of Cambodia to the *New York Times*.

Both men thought Vietnam would have had a better chance to gain its independence under General DeLattre than under M. Letourneau.

751J.00/5-853 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, May 8, 1953—3:49 p. m.

5542. In advising FonOff substance Secretary's conversation with Thai Ambassador (Deptels 5506 and 5514) [2] on possibility Thai action in UN, make clear this was in response initial question from Thai Ambassador. We of course wish avoid impression with French that US, having failed to persuade them to agree take case UN, is now seeking induce others do so contrary French wishes and without their knowledge.

Tell FonOff we were advised late yesterday informally by Thai Ambassador he has rec'd instructions to raise Thai case in UN. He will be discussing problem with Dept and USUN this P.M. While Dept prepared give Thai initiative suitable support, we will strongly recommend Thai Govt have discussions with French and Laotians before proceeding with formal action in UN so maximum of coordination may be achieved.[3]

In view Thai Govt's decision, Fr may wish consider desirability concerting with Thais and Laotians on some appropriate coordinated Laotian-Thai presentation of matter UN, with of course strong Fr support.

While we should make fully clear to Fr we respect their great responsibility and understand Govt's difficulties with Fr public opinion re attacks in UN against so-called Fr colonialism, we believe we shld point out long term possibilities in present situation. Indeed coordinated Thai-Laotian action with Laos fully supported by ancient and long independent Asian state wld vastly contribute to demonstrate in SEA extent sovereignty now enjoyed by Laos and serve to cut ground from under Arab-Asian attacks against French Union policy.[4]

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal (PSA), Ward P. Allen (EUR), and Ridgway B. Knight (WE). Repeated for information to Bangkok as telegram 2105, to Saigon as 2177, to London as 7275, and to USUN at New York as 425.

[2] Telegram 2078 to Bangkok, May 6, repeated to Paris as telegram 5506, summarized a conversation between the Secretary of State and Pote Sarasin, the Thai Ambassador, on May 5. The telegram read in part as follows: "Thai Ambassador inquired possibility U.N. resolution dealing threat from Laos. Secretary indicated Thai Government might desire itself raise question of threat to Thailand under Article 34 at this time before actual aggressive action against Thailand on grounds (1) Thailand would derive maximum possible benefit by focusing attention world on Thailand's position which might act as deterrent and (2) if Thailand waits until after aggression occurred damage already done." (751J.00/5-653)

Telegram 2084 to Bangkok, repeated to Paris as 5514, May 6, not printed, summarized a Dulles-Sarasin conversation of May 6. (792.5 MSP/5-653) The conversations of May 5 and May 6 concerned military aid to Thailand as well as the question of action at the United Nations. For the memoranda of the two conversations, see volume XII.

[3] Ambassador Sarasin met with John D. Hickerson, Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, on May 8 to discuss procedure. Hickerson assured the Ambassador of full U.S. support for Thai action in the United Nations. The meeting is recorded in Hickerson's memorandum of conversation of May 8 and in telegram 2124 to Bangkok, May 11. (751J.00/5-853; 330/5-1153)

DULLES

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[4] In telegram 5879 from Paris, May 9, Ambassador Dillon reported that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been approached regarding the possibility of Thailand bringing the Laotian case to the United Nations. He summarized the French position as follows: "Foreign Office attitude on this question is not one of all-out opposition to Thailand taking case to United Nations but it is unmistakably clear that Foreign Office continues to believe under present circumstances disadvantages outweigh advantages and strongly hopes Thailand will not take such action." (751J.00/5–953) On the same date, Dillon also transmitted telegram 5884, which read as follows: "During meeting with Mayer this afternoon he discussed with me question of possible Siamese appeal to United Nations. In view of present military situation with Viet Minh forces in Laos withdrawing, he does not feel an appeal by Thailand would be appropriate. On the other hand, if Viet Minh forces had reached the Mekong and established themselves there, he said an appeal by Thailand would obviously have been called for and it would have been strongly supported by France and Laos.

"He then said that the decision whether or not to appeal to the United Nations had been a difficult one and that he had finally agreed with Bidault that appeal should not be made because of fear that it might very well have led to more active Chinese intervention." (751J.00/5–953)

751G.00/5–853

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] May 8, 1953.

Subject: Connection between Korean and Indochina settlements and the possibility of a negotiated settlement in Indochina.

Reference is made to your memorandum of May 5[2] on the above subject. The views of FE are as follows:

(1) There is no commitment on the part of the U.S. to establish a connection or necessary relationship between, on the one hand, a Korean armistice and political settlement, and, on the other hand, a settlement of the *present* Indochina conflict.

(2) No commitment made to Mayer and Bidault when they were here would in any way influence the conduct of the U.S. in the period before or after a Korean armistice, provided the Indochina conflict remains qualitatively as it is at present, i.e., provided there is no influx of Chinese Communist "volunteers". (The appearance of a Vietminh air force might, if we so desired, be considered a qualitative change even in the absence of Chinese elements on Indochinese soil.)

(3) The Secretary told Mayer and Bidault in effect that he regarded an overt Chinese Communist aggression against Indochina

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] *Ante*, p. 540.

before a Korean armistice as highly improbable, adding that such an eventuality should in no way diminish our efforts toward victory in Indochina. As to an overt aggression by the Chinese Communists *after* an armistice in Korea, an aggression presumably made possible by such an armistice (this was the main French concern), Mr. Dulles said that this would be viewed with the gravest concern by us and that it would in our view strike at the very basis on which we had entered upon the armistice. (He, of course, made no commitment or statement on behalf of the other participants in our side in the Korean conflict.)

(4) The statements made about the interdependence of the struggles in Korea and in Indochina (cited in the reference memorandum) are, therefore, restatements of the obvious orchestration from one central point of all the assaults on the free world. They involve no new commitment other than that arising for the U.S. in the event of overt Chinese Communist aggression in Indochina *after* a Korean armistice. (In this connection, the French have, so far as FE is aware, made no attempt to link the invasion of Laos to the current armistice negotiations in Korea.)

(5) It is certainly an objective of U.S. policy to end the struggle in Indochina and to restore peace there, but there is no commitment to link U.S. policy toward Korea and U.S. policy toward the *present* struggle in Indochina, i.e., we would no more hold up a settlement in Korea because the present struggle in Indochina is continuing than we would, presumably, hold up a treaty for Austria until we got Berlin straightened out, even though both situations are integral and therefore interdependent parts of the Communist attack against the free world.

(6) From the Communist side there is apparently some desire for an armistice in Korea; there can be none for a settlement in Indochina except on terms that we could not accept. Korea is costing the Soviet Union considerable matériel and for the Chinese Communists it represents a drain in both men and matériel. Indochina costs the Russians and Chinese very little while it is bleeding France and is a heavy burden for the United States. The war in Korea is in stalemate; that in Indochina is characterized by enemy initiative and a depressed morale on the anti-Communist side in France and in the Associated States.

(7) There is an obvious advantage for France in giving to the Indochina conflict an international status and sanction which it does not now have. The invasion of Laos is a splendid opportunity to secure such a status through the U.N. under the most favorable possible conditions: the French should be urged to take it. But such action would not, could not and should not involve injecting Indochina into the U.N. Korean negotiations (any more than Formosa). There is no chance, in accordance with the above reasoning that the parties with whom the U.N. is dealing in Korea would accept any talks on Indochina or indeed that our U.N. partners would support a demand on our part that we refrain from an armistice or from a peace settlement in Korea until hostilities cease in Indochina.

The reference memorandum also raises the question of what would be "an honorable settlement" in Indochina—a subject which is further developed in Mr. Knight's memorandum of May 6 to Mr. Merchant.[8]

On the basis of the present state of political and military forces in Indochina, any negotiated settlement which the Communists would accept would be a triumph for them since it would leave control of the country to Ho and his eight well equipped divisions of regulars with the immense prestige of their seven years war against the French ending in the withdrawal of the latter from all or part of the country. Such a settlement could hardly be called an "honorable" one since it would leave to the not doubtful mercies of the enemy a good many thousands of people who have thrown in their lot with the free world on the basis of French and of U.S. assurances of a determination to guarantee them from Communist enslavement.

A vastly improved military situation is the necessary basis of any settlement which our side could honorably accept. (Eventually, any truly national government of Viet-Nam will have to include Vietminh elements but we would hope that the opportunity for the wise statesmanship required to bind up the wounds of what has been, in part, a civil struggle, might be in the hands of the anti-Communist elements depending for their authority not only upon a maximum degree of popular support but also upon a national army with a record of participation in victory over the Communist armies.)

Much more probable than any actual direct negotiation at this time between Ho and the Associated States and/or France would seem to be the probability, if the war continues more than a few months longer without any improvement in the status of our side, of the growth of a movement for peace in Viet-Nam on a basis which would have great appeal to the people of the country. The people of the country are weary of war; they would like to see the last of the French Union troops (French, North Africans, Senegalese and Foreign Legionnaires). Such realization as exists of the importance of the French armies in defending the country from Communist enslavement will not continue to grow and will probably decline rather rapidly in the face of a continuance of a military situation in which the armies of Ho are running the armies of Salan and Linares ragged. Therefore, there may well develop in the next few months with covert support from the Vietminh and perhaps overt leadership from some "attentiste" personalities a movement for peace on a democratic basis: elections, departure of foreign troops, disarmament of other levies and so forth. Such a movement might be expected to develop great popular appeal. The weary French and the no longer hopeful followers of Bao Dai and Tam could yield to it without, in appearance at least, having surrendered to Communism. A certain amount of intrigue in the

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[8] *Ante*, p. 544.

Oriental manner would help. But the result would be to fasten Communist control, perhaps disguised at first, on the whole of Indochina.

The key to the problem remains prompt and vigorous military action by our side with U.S. material support leading, in as short a time as possible, to a serious curtailment if not an elimination of the military potential of Ho's regular divisions. There are, of course, political factors involved. The recommendations of FE on the subject are contained in a memorandum dated May 4 addressed to Mr. Matthews.[4] A decision that such vigorous military action (with its political concomitants) is either unfeasible or undesirable from our point of view would face us with the necessity of recognizing a serious defeat for the free world in Indochina—I do not believe it will come to that.

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[4] The memorandum of May 4, "Evaluation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Letourneau Plan for Military Operations in Indochina," not printed, was drafted by Bonsal and transmitted by Assistant Secretary Robertson to Deputy Under Secretary Matthews, with distribution to other interested areas of the Department of State. This 11-page document traced interdepartmental consideration of French strategic plans, discussed recent military and political developments in Indochina, and urged that both military and political talks be initiated with the French with a view toward increasing French flexibility in relations with the Associated States and intensifying the French military effort. (751G.00/5-453)

751J.5/5-953 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State

SECRET PARIS, May 9, 1953—2 p. m.

5878. Repeated information Saigon 252; London, Moscow unnumbered. Apparent withdrawal toward north majority Viet Minh Forces in Laos has aroused considerable speculation here re reasons therefor as well as motives behind original movement into Laos.[1]

Most logical of reasons advanced for sudden Viet Minh reversal and cessation activity is that Viet Minh had outrun their line supply and that lengthened lines communications in sparsely settled country had left them in difficulty re food as well as military supplies. Confronted with strong French force at Luang Prabang and Plaine des Jarres, where Viet Minh could not launch sustained attack or face heavier French fire, Viet Minh decided withdraw in belief they had been successful on several counts. Viet Minh had created uncertainty in Associated States re French ability hold on, thus strengthening tendency attentism and creating psychological climate favorable to

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[1] In telegram 58 from Vientiane, May 9, Chargé Thomson reported that French authorities believed that the Viet Minh campaign in Laos was over for the season, presumably due to Viet Minh fatigue and supply difficulties, and the early onset of the rainy season. Thomson cautioned, however, that it was premature to conclude that the Viet Minh would not seek further gains during the present campaign. He further warned that northern Laos would henceforth be a trouble area to be watched constantly. (751J.5/5-953)

Viet Minh. French had been compelled fly in troops and supplies which could have been advantageously used in Tonkin and in so doing may have immobilized sizable number troops in strong defensive positions while Viet Minh left to move at will and still in possession of initiative. French Government will probably face severe questioning in National Assembly as result Laos reverses and difficulties with Cambodians which were probably heightened by Viet Minh move into Laos and resultant fears created in Cambodia. As result invasion Viet Minh have been able set up "free Laotian Government" and are in position organize Laotians for future action. When rainy season ends, attack will resume from base consolidated and strengthened in meantime.

Another thesis is that Soviets have had their peace offensive so effectively blunted, at least in France, that they decided call halt to offensive and order withdrawal for time being. Soviet radio and press comment approving Viet Minh action as liberation move tends argue against this explanation. At same time Viet Minh withdrawal does remove this "stain" on Soviet peace offensive and might be expected ease pressures toward appealing case to UN.

Whatever may be reasons for easing military situation Laos, this new development should make task French Government meeting criticism in Assembly somewhat easier than would have been case had Viet Minh advance continued.

DILLON

Editorial Note

On May 9, 1953, the Secretary of State delivered a press conference statement on the situation in Laos, which read in part as follows:

> "Communist Viet Minh forces began their movement toward the Royal Capital City of Luang Prabang in Laos on April 12.
>
> "Following an appeal from the Government of Laos on April 13 to the free world to condemn the aggression, the United States issued a statement of support and sympathy. [See footnote 2, page 471.]
>
> "The urgent need for cargo aircraft to aid French and Lao forces in meeting this aggression was discussed by me with French officials during our stay in Paris for the recent NATO meeting.
>
> "Within 24 hours it was agreed at the highest level that such aircraft, if available, should be dispatched to Indochina. Within another 24 hours the aircraft were located with the Far East Command. Within another 24 hours civilian operators were located to fly the planes, because the French did not have crews accustomed to handle these planes and we did not desire that our military personnel should fly into the combat zone. The plan was actually put into operation within a few hours after our return from Paris, and the aircraft arrived at Hanoi on May 5 and were made operational immediately."

Secretary Dulles also indicated that funds were being made available to ease refugee problems and that small arms ammunition and certain naval items were being made available to Thailand in light of the situation. For the full text of the statement (Press Release No. 253), see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 18, 1953, page 708.

751G.00/5–953 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, May 9, 1953—8 p. m.

5883. Repeated information Cairo 56.[1] Eyes only for the Secretary from Ambassador. I received the President's letter of May 6 contained Deptel 5522 Friday noon [2] and took first opportunity to discuss substance of letter with Mayer. Talk took place Saturday afternoon after public announcement of General Navarre's appointment as Commanding General for Indochina.[3] I told Mayer that the President had hoped that a "forceful and inspirational" leader would be appointed promptly but omitted all references to personalities except to say that the President had indicated that a man of the type of General Guillaume would have been ideal. Mayer then asked me to convey the following to the President:

General Guillaume would have been an ideal choice but recently his health had not been good. This factor even more than the difficulty of replacing him in Morocco had ruled him out of consideration.

General Valluy who was also considered had been ruled out due to difficulties he would have in working smoothly with Vietnamese forces. General Valluy had been in Indochina previously and at one time in 1946 had had to take strong measures at Haiphong that made him very unpopular with local population. Commanding General Indochina should preferably be a man with no previous experience in Indochina as was case with De Lattre. General Navarre was my personal choice. I knew him when he served in Germany under General Koenig and when he served in Algeria. I feel he is forceful and strong leader who will see things objectively and will accurately appraise and report the over-all military situation. General Navarre is also a leading expert on intelligence which has been outstanding weakness of French forces in Indochina.

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[1] Secretary of State Dulles and Mutual Security Director Stassen visited the Near East from May 9 to May 29. Their first stop was Cairo.

[2] Telegram 5522 to Paris of Thursday, May 7, is printed on p. 550.

[3] On May 9, the French Government announced the appointment of Gen. Henri Navarre as Commander in Chief in Indochina. General Navarre had previously served as Chief of Staff to Marshal Alphonse Juin, Commander of Allied Land Forces in Central Europe.

Regarding second point concerning self rule for Indochina, Mayer said to tell President that he would insert a paragraph or two in his speech to the Assembly on Tuesday[4] along lines suggested by President. He will also repeat this thought publicly at every appropriate time. He also said to tell the President that he and Auriol had taken a personal hand to bring negotiations with Cambodia to successful conclusion which reached today.[5] He felt that announcement of this success should also help to prove France's good faith in working toward self government for Indochina.

DILLON

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[4] Mayer delivered a statement of general policy in the National Assembly on Tuesday, May 12. For text, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1953, Débats*, pp. 2639–2643.

[5] Reference is to the Franco-Cambodian provisional agreement signed at Paris on May 9. The agreement, which was negotiated by a Cambodian delegation headed by Foreign Minister Penn Nouth, and the French Ministry for the Associated States, was submitted to the two governments for ratification. Under its terms, the King of Cambodia became Commander in Chief of the Cambodian Army and assumed responsibility for the nation's security. For the text of the communiqué issued on May 9 specifying the provisions of the agreement, see *L'Année Politique, 1953*, p. 576. For additional documentation on these negotiations, see Cambodia, *Livre Jaune*, I, pp. 73–112.

851G.131/5–1353 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, May 13, 1953—10 a. m.

2190. Repeated Paris 366, Bangkok 96, Singapore 61, Hong Kong 85, Tokyo 85, London 39, Hanoi, Phnom Penh, Vientiane unnumbered. Strong communiqué issued yesterday by Vietnamese Government (Embassy telegram 2178, May 11, information Paris)[1] indicative of consternation and high feeling Vietnamese Government and business circles here over devaluation, particularly manner in which effected. Dominant note is that action is flagrant violation Franco-Viet accords which calculated deal sharp blow to confidence in French. Bao Dai reported be in black mood.[2] French businessmen similarly perturbed, but essentially because of expected repercussions on their financial position. French functionaries reaction relatively calm, but some concern expressed over likelihood rising living costs.

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[1] On May 10, the French Government announced the devaluation of the piaster from 17 to 10 francs. Telegram 2178 from Saigon, May 11, not printed, contained a free translation of a communiqué issued by Le Van Hoach, Vice President of Vietnam, denouncing the French action. (851G.131/5–1153)

[2] In telegram 2123 from Saigon, May 11, McClintock reported that the French apparently had obtained the assent of Bao Dai to the devaluation by allowing the Chief of State to make a last-minute transfer of piasters at the old rate of exchange. (851G.10/5–1153)

French officials here stress devaluation strictly decision taken in Paris in attempt to ease political crisis facing French Government over budgetary questions. Privately they do not hide their discomfiture at lack of consideration shown for interests Associated States. Ironic note: Letourneau himself was not consulted prior to his government's action.

While there is much talk of a steep rise in prices and serious economic disruption, prevailing situation is one of confusion, with no one having clear idea degree to which devaluation will affect economic and political position Associated States. Certain Nationalists take view that devaluation not unfortunate since it indicative inherent weakness France and favors greater Vietnamese direction of own affairs. View this group is that Vietnamese should not make much of breach accords since it in interest Vietnam not lean on accords, particularly Pau accords which alleged already largely out of date.

In contrast to Vietnamese Government and business leaders, Vietnamese in general have only hazy impression devaluation and up to now more concerned over what devaluation will bring to them in form of economic problems than in political implications thereof.

Viet Minh expected to exploit devaluation propagandawise.

Cabinet met yesterday to discuss measures cope with situation. Press account steps projected by government in following telegram.[3]

McClintock

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[3] Telegram 2191 from Saigon, May 13, concerning measures contemplated by the Vietnamese Government, is not printed. (851G.131/5–1353)

751G.00/5–1353 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State [1]

TOP SECRET Paris, May 13, 1953—7 p. m.

5934. Repeated information Damascus 19 for Secretary's eyes only. Washington eyes only [Acting] Secretary from Ambassador. In private conversation with Devinat today, he passed on to me certain feelings regarding Indochina which he said were shared unanimously by the other members of the Parliamentary Commission on Indochina, but which, for obvious reasons, could not be made public. These thoughts concerned the role the United States has played and is playing in the Indochina conflict. Devinat had hoped to have the opportunity to outline these views personally to the Secretary when he was here for NATO, but as he did not get the opportunity, he passed them on to me personally to be used in strictest confidence.

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[1] The source text is accompanied by the following memorandum of transmittal by William J. McWilliams of the Executive Secretariat to Acting Secretary Smith: "General Smith: The attached Eyes Only cable from Ambassador Dillon contains the views of Devinat on Indo-China. Devinat is a Radical Socialist member of the Chamber of Deputies who headed the Parliamentary Group which went to Indo-China some weeks ago.

"I recommend that you authorize me to forward the telegram to Mr. Robertson for his information and action."

Smith wrote "OK" beside the above recommendation and added the following handwritten notation: "Robertson—You should know that for *two years* we have been pressing the French by all channels to take C.I.A. and other competent technical assistance and guidance."

Begin Devinat's views:

First: American political effort in Indochina has been and continues to be very helpful and on right track. US prodding of French Government to make clearer fact that decision to give full independence to Associated States had been taken and is irrevocable is required and should continue. He had particularly high personal praise for role that has been played by Ambassador Heath.

Second: Feeling that time had come for full frankness and without questioning generous motives of US military aid, Devinat and committee unanimously felt US military assistance in Indochina had not been as helpful as it should have been, had been misdirected and must share equally with French military command the blame for present situation. The US alone had experience in jungle warfare against Japan during World War II. US must have able officers experienced in this type of warfare. French military command had little experience this type warfare and mistakenly tried to import continental European warfare based on heavy equipment to Indochina. When US offered military help, they merely asked French command for what they needed. French command, because of lack of experience or mere desire for equipment, requested large quantities of heavy equipment of one sort or another which was, in effect, useless in Indochina. US military in Indochina accepted requests without any real question. As a result, there now is substantial quantity US equipment in Saigon which is useless in present type of warfare. What was needed in Indochina was money to pay lightly armed native troops and not quantities of expensive military hardware. Although present official attitude was to favor new lightly armed native units, Devinat feared French military would give this relatively low priority unless strongly urged by US military advisors. Present US advisors in Indochina seem incapable of giving necessary prodding either (1) because personal capacity not up to job which Devinat said he believed to be the case; or (2) because being held back by lack of proper instructions from top military quarters in Washington. The greatest thing we could do to help shorten Indochina war would be to send as chief of military mission to Indochina a forceful top ranking army or marine officer experienced in jungle warfare, and to make it evident that this officer had full confidence of and direct access to top level military and civilian officials in Washington. Some relaxation our policy of limiting aid for military hardware also required. He hoped we would not take this criticism amiss, but situation so serious that time had come for complete frankness, and this was area in which US could, if it wished, be of major help in shortening the war.

DILLON

751G.00/5-1453 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, May 14, 1953—5 p. m.

5949. Rptd info Damascus 20 eyes only for Secretary. Department eyes only for Acting Secretary from Ambassador. Embassy's telegram 5934, May 13 (Damascus 19). While we think Devinat's views and those of Parliamentary mission have much to commend them and while he is well-regarded as an honest and able man, we should not forget that he is also a politician, member of National Assembly and there are political overtones in his approach to Indochina problem inasmuch as he is one of group highly critical of Letourneau. We believe that in assessing his suggestions we should keep in mind certain aspects of Indochina situation as outlined hereunder.

French have slowly come around to idea of building up lightly-armed Associated States units to meet Viet Minh on their own ground. De Lattre took first plunge by accepting, and selling to French Government, idea of creating regular national armies in Indochina. In doing so, he and French Government were aware of risk they were running of building up army which might either turn over to enemy or become sufficiently strong to enable Associated States present exorbitant demands to French Government or make deal with Ho Chi-Minh. French Government is also taking similar risk in creating commando-type battalions, which presumably would operate throughout countryside free from actual French control with attendant risk desertion or connivance with enemy. French have reached these decisions on their own and without pressure from us. While we have encouraged development national armies, we should keep in mind that decision create them was originally French decision without reference to us. We should, therefore, take heed that we not get so far out in front in urging French adoption military operations in Indochina that we get ourselves in position assuming responsibility for results flowing therefrom without attendant authority.

French authorities Indochina have apparently consistently resisted United States efforts have military observers in field and have exhibited undue sensitivity United States efforts deal directly with Associated States. If United States should now name forceful top-ranking Army or Marine officer experienced in jungle warfare with idea that he would sell French on new approach to military operations, it might lead to considerable friction unless such step were preceded by frank exchange views on this subject between top-ranking French and United States military commands and agreement reached on tactics to be followed. It is difficult to believe that French military command in IC would institute such far-reaching changes in conduct of military operations without approval at top in French Government, for such change would have far-reaching political as well as military implications. This problem appears, therefore, to be one to be discussed and worked out at high military levels and approved by heads French Government prior to any possible appointment of new United States chief of military mission.

DILLON

851G.10/5-1553 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 15, 1953—4 p. m.

2215. Department pass Rangoon, Hanoi; repeated information Paris 375, Bangkok 102, Singapore 64, Hong Kong 89, Tokyo 87, Rangoon 26, Phnom Penh, Vientiane unnumbered, Hanoi 280. Director General of the Institut d'Emission, which is a quadripartite institution controlling currency issue of Associated States with French participation, tells us he was quite aware sudden French measure to devaluate piaster was taken under American pressure. Same remark was repeated independently by head of Banque d'Indochine.

We were not surprised that this canard should so soon appear and at Monday's[1] staff meeting had alerted our propaganda people to meet it. While we are of course replying to such remarks that French decision to devaluate piaster was unilateral, it would be helpful if Department could confirm our impression that US at no time requested devaluation of French Government.[2]

Attitude of more respective French officials here was summed up by General Allard when he expressed regret that for momentary domestic political advantage French in devaluating Indochinese piaster had jeopardized whole framework of relationship Associated States to French Union.

MCCLINTOCK

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[1] May 11.

[2] In telegram 2260 to Saigon, May 16, the Department of State indicated that the Embassy was correct in its belief that the United States had at no time requested France to devalue the piaster. However, the United States had shown great interest in French views on the subject. The attention of the Embassy was directed particularly to the minutes of the meeting of Mar. 30 with Letourneau in Washington. (The pertinent portion of the minutes of that meeting is printed on p. 440.) (851G.10/5-1553)

751G.00/5–1653

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the President[1]

SECRET PARIS, May 15, 1953.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I have just received your letter of May 6th,[2] giving your views on the situation in Indo-China. The Secretary of State had previously forwarded the contents of your letter by telegram, and I had the opportunity of discussing your views in general with René Mayer. The telegram containing your views reached me just after the announcement of General Navarre's appointment, so I did not mention General Valluy by name in my talk with Mayer. However, Mayer discussed with me, on his own volition, various people who had been considered, among them, General Valluy, and said that his name had finally been removed from consideration because of his unpopularity with the local Viet Nam population. This unpopularity came about because of certain strong measures he had had to take when he was in Indo-China in 1946. The Prime Minister said that General Navarre, whom he knew well, was his personal choice, and he was sure that he would fill the position in the manner desired by you. He commented particularly on his forcefulness and daring, and also on his long experience in the field of military intelligence which Mayer said had fallen down badly in Indo-China.

Mayer was also much impressed by your suggestion that France should make clearer to the world the fact that they intended to leave Indo-China as soon as the war was over. He said that he would try to make such declarations whenever appropriate occasions arose. I think you will also be interested in hearing that, at lunch yesterday, I had an opportunity to talk about Indo-China with Edgar Faure, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Assembly. He expressed the exact same views as were contained in your letter without any urging from me. As he put it, France was acting in good faith in Indo-China, but because of bad public relations, she gave the appearance of acting in bad faith. He felt that the only cure was continual public repetition of the French intention to leave Indo-China after the war. He even went so far as to say that the question of Indo-China's remaining within the French Union should be decided by the Indo-Chinese people themselves after the war was finished.

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[1] Ambassador Dillon transmitted copies of this letter to Secretary Dulles on May 15 and to Under Secretary Smith on May 16. (751G.00/5–1553 and 751G.00/5–1653)

[2] For text, see telegram 5522 to Paris, May 7, p. 550.

Your letter has been and will continue to be most helpful to me in my talks on this subject with members of the French Government and Parliament.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely, [File copy not signed]

330/5–1653 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, May 16, 1953—5 : 32 p. m.

5651. French Ambassador informed Acting Secretary May 15 he had new instructions from Paris endeavor obtain US support for French position re bringing cases aggression Southeast Asia before UN or at least assurances US was not urging Thailand bring case.[2] He indicated possibilities very serious repercussions France were it published that US not only not supporting France but agitating with Thailand to bring case against strong French opposition.

Acting Secretary stated we were not agitating with Thailand to bring this case before UN but our basic position was unchanged and we would support Thais if they presented case as we had already told them and told French.[3] He assured Bonnet we did not wish cause difficulty over this matter and were not now taking initiative though we did not conceal that basic difference of view over question of bringing matter before UN remained. He agreed with Bonnet we perhaps had breathing spell now though he stressed we believed it was only temporary.

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[1] Drafted by Robert H. McBride, Officer in Charge of French–Iberian Affairs. Repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 2265 and to Bangkok as telegram 2175.

[2] The meeting of May 15 between Walter Bedell Smith, the Acting Secretary of State, and Henri Bonnet, the French Ambassador, was recorded in a memorandum of conversation by Robert H. McBride, the Officer in Charge of French–Iberian Affairs. (Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, lot 64 D 199) Smith and Bonnet had also discussed the question of an appeal to the United Nations on May 12; the memorandum of that conversation, by Bonsal of PSA, is in file 751J.00/5–1253. Bonnet discussed the matter further with Assistant Secretary Robertson on May 21. The memorandum of that conversation, by Robert E. Hoey, Officer in Charge of Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs, is in file 330/5–2153. On May 22, Bonnet told Assistant Secretary Hickerson that his government was "very upset" at the extent to which the United States had encouraged Thailand to raise the problem at the United Nations. The memorandum of the Hickerson–Bonnet conversation, by Ward P. Allen, United Nations Adviser in the Bureau of European Affairs, is in file 792.00/5–2253.

[3] In telegram 2210 to Bangkok, May 20, Acting Secretary Smith indicated that the Department of State was gratified to learn that the Government of Thailand had decided to submit to the Security Council the matter of the threat to Thailand arising from the invasion of Laos. The telegram read in part as follows: "Inform Prime Minister foregoing and assure him US Government continues prepared support Thailand's presentation Security Council and assist in other practical ways in course preparing resolution or other supporting material." (751J.00/5–1953)

In conclusion French Ambassador reiterated importance this matter to French Government.

SMITH

851G.10/5–1653 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 16, 1953—7 p. m.

2227. Repeated information Paris 382, Hanoi unnumbered. Letourneau spoke with great candor this morning re the intolerable position in which he had been placed by French Government's decision to devalue piaster without prior consultation either with him or the Associated States. He said his first instinct on receiving thunderbolt was instantly to resign as in eyes of Indochinese sudden decision of French Government could only mean either that he had been deceiving leaders of the three Associated States or that he was such a simpleton and so untrustworthy that his own government had kept him in dark. He had been persuaded to remain however "for time being" simply because if he did resign attitudes of three governments in IC would harden even further.

Letourneau said that he would resign upon his return to Paris. He said that it would be more than a human being could be expected to take to have to sit silently in forthcoming parliamentary debate or else to defend government for a measure in which he did not believe. He wished to regain liberty of action as a simple deputy to participate freely in forthcoming debate on IC.

It is for Paris Embassy to comment on what effect Letourneau's decision will have on life of Mayer cabinet. My impression was that he would not be surprised if it caused government downfall.

In intrinsic issue of benefits to be obtained by devaluation, Letourneau said (last sentence second paragraph Embtel 2215 May 15) that when in Washington various officers of Department (he mentioned Bonsal, MacArthur, and economic experts) had urged advantages of devaluation. Letourneau said he had countered these arguments by stating that benefits of devaluation would be evanescent since inflation in IC would more than eat up any temporary savings accomplished by devaluation. He also pointed out that that portion of French budget which would be affected by devaluation was not whole French budget but only that slice which was applied to conduct of war in IC.

As for budget of Vietnam Letourneau said that it would have to be rewritten since calculations made in 1953 budget (Embassy despatch 496 May 7)[1] were now completely upset by new monetary situation.

Re charges in French press (Paris 5942 and 5941 May 13, Deptel 5584 sent Paris repeated Saigon 2209)[2] Minister said that stories have much over-exaggerated extent of clandestine transfers. He said plain arithmetic showed that taking into account total legal transfers of piasters into francs, there was very little left over for blackmarket. He added that even at new rate illegal transfers would continue so long as dollar was valued differently in Saigon and Paris.

Letourneau said he had written Mayer pointing out that apparently French government was formulating policy on advice of those political elements in France which were neutralist and which had consistently advocated withdrawal from war in IC. Rather caustically he had observed to Prime Minister that apparently latters cabinet read only such newspapers as *Le Monde*, *L'Observateur*, and *Franc Tireur*.

McClintock

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[1] Despatch 496 from Saigon concerning the Vietnamese national budget for 1953 is not printed. (851G.10/5–753)

[2] Telegrams 5941 and 5942 from Paris, May 13, concerning charges of corruption in Indochina which appeared in the French press, are not printed. (751G.00/5–1353) Telegram 5584 to Paris, May 12, not printed, described an editorial in the *Washington Post* of that date titled "Indochina Scandal," which referred to articles which had appeared in the French press. (751G.00/5–1253)

711.5851G/5–1853 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, May 18, 1953—5 : 14 p. m.

5655. You will recall that at the final meeting with Mayer at White House on March 28, President made certain general comments regarding Letourneau plan for bringing hostilities in Indochina to successful conclusion. In reply Mayer in name of French Govt said that he would welcome our sending US military officers to Indochina in order to pursue evaluation of plan, and President expressed willingness to arrange it. Defense has now completed its study of material furnished by Letourneau and Allard and wishes to take advantage of Mayer's suggestion to send high level military mission to Indochina in order to study situation with General Navarre and explore ways and means through which American assistance can best be fitted into workable plans for aggressive pursuit of hostilities under present circumstances.[2] A principal objective of mission will be to ascertain what military plans and capabilities (manpower, equipment and particularly air force) will be required so that there will be firm prospect of reversing current military trend by beginning of next fighting season, i.e., Oct 1953. Proposed agenda will of course be submitted in due course.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA, and Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., Special Assistant to Deputy Under Secretary Matthews. Repeated to Saigon for information as telegram 2271.

Please inform Mayer of the above as soon as possible requesting him to indicate (*a*) his continued readiness to have such a mission visit Indochina and (*b*) approximate date at which mission could proceed to Indochina.

Department understands General Navarre arrives Saigon about May 19; he will obviously wish to become familiar with the details of the situation before receiving proposed American mission. We have in mind for the arrival of the latter a date such as June 10. The mission would probably stay in Indochina for not more than a month. It will probably include a State Department representative in an observer-advisory capacity although the leadership and objectives will be military.

Department believes this mission can represent important forward step so far as Indochina situation is concerned and hopes that Mayer and Navarre will agree. For your information such military evaluation would presumably lead later to talks at political level and to determination of additional American aid for Indochina.

SMITH

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[2] The substance of discussions of the State–JCS meeting of May 15, not printed, indicates that the matter of a military mission to Indochina was considered at that time. (State–JCS Meetings, lot 61 D 417)

751G.00/5–2053 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 20, 1953—7 p. m.
[Received 2:55 p. m.]

2256. Repeated information Paris 394, London 45, Singapore, Hanoi, Vientiane, Phnom Penh unnumbered. We are approaching time of transition in IC when certain amount of stock taking might prove useful. Not only has there been an announced change in French political relationships with AS (new status of High Commissioners), but there will also within next fortnight be complete shift in military High Command. Furthermore advent monsoon brings lull in military operations until end of September. New and unexpected factor is unilateral devaluation IC piaster which has subjected whole framework AS union with France to unprecedented stress with possible result entirely new relationships will evolve between three states and protecting power. Finally problem of how to win war in IC will in next few weeks come before critical scrutiny in French National Assembly and US Congress.

It is obvious that despite continuing effort of seven years and material increase in Vietnamese native armed forces successful termination of war against Communist arms is still as far from sight as ever. This conclusion reached at time when our government is advocating an increased program of US aid for Indochina.

I. It is submitted that if Congress acts on this program certain military measures should be undertaken by both French and Vietnamese. These include:

(1) More audacious military leadership. French High Command should act, not react. Whole conduct of war has been founded on a Maginot-minded holding of "strong points" (*sic*) [1] leaving military initiative to enemy. Viet Minh should be fought in their own style, their coolie trains harried, their LOC destroyed, their deficiency in firepower made fatal lack.

(2) Greater impetus should be given to creation of a real Vietnamese army. In addition to 54 battalion program for 1953 this can be done by:

(A) Placing certain French Union elements, such as artillery, engineers, and communications under Vietnamese command. This should be possible particularly when south Vietnam (zone of communications) is entrusted to Vietnamese forces. Such a step would contribute greatly to morale of nascent Vietnamese army.

(B) Training of officers should be stepped up and as quickly as possible more officers of field grade should be brought forward. Training of specialists should receive equal emphasis. At present time there is only one general in whole Vietnamese army.

(C) Light and mobile character of proposed 54 commando battalions should be emphasized as Viet Minh must be matched by force of equal mobility and firepower capable of fighting in bush. Vietnamese demands for air force should be resisted in short term prospective, as their future pilots and ground crews can be trained by integration with FAF. Goal should be phasing of equipment and training which would result in a well-balanced national army at such time as war is won and French Union forces withdraw from Vietnam. However, there is already enough, if not too much, heavy hardware here which is practically useless off the highway.

(D) Provided training is adequate Vietnam militia and national guard forces should be given ample ammunition and weapons. Present system of doling out six cartridges per man and insufficient light arms for a platoon does not breed that form of courage which could stand up against better armed Viet Minh.

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[1] Parenthetical insertion in the source text.

(E) In addition to building up field grade officers, there should be some top native leadership to which armed forces can rally. This is not now and never will be supplied by Bao Dai (see below).

(3) Improve French Union airlift capacity by indigenous means. In other words, bring more mechanics to man presently scheduled maintenance facilities so that aircraft could fly as many hours per month as in USAF. This would practically double airlift capacity of present number of aircraft in this theater. Our line of how this can be accomplished was set forth in Embtels 2186 and 2218.[2]

II. On political side, it is useless to win this war militarily if it is to be lost politically. Thus far most popular leader in Vietnam is Ho Chi-minh. Conceding that military victory can be won, unless there is a strong political framework in this country forces generated by Ho Chi-minh may still win final victory by political action. Chances of Communists in this regard have been greatly increased by recent action and inaction, such as devaluation measure and unskillful handling of King of Cambodia.

Following political measures are proposed:

(1) French and Associated States Government should issue a joint and unequivocal declaration of independence for the three Indochinese states with assurances of mutual support until war is won and after. US by appropriate statement should support this declaration. Although it is realized that French National Assembly may cavil at such a proposal, essence French plan for winning war by using native troops implies that these troops will be animated by some zeal to fight. Such zeal can only be generated if in fact Indochinese soldiers are fighting for real independence.

(2) There should be a long-range program of political indoctrination of Vietnamese army so that when "Victory Day" comes there will be a body of well-trained troops loyal to regime.

(3) President Tam should be encouraged in his program of land reform and of elections for National Assembly. Unfortunately, land reform program has been much watered down as result of pressure from vested interests both Vietnamese and French. However, these two measures will give population sense of participation in nation's destiny and will undercut Viet Minh propaganda.

(4) We should likewise sustain Governor Tri in his intelligent and valiant endeavor in Tonkin to develop an indigenous militia and fortified villages capable of resisting Viet Minh attack.

(5) As long-range project means should be found either to curb present unlimited powers of Bao Dai or (in my view preferably) to get rid of Bao Dai. At present time Vietnam is country without constitution. There is no document which gives Bao Dai sovereign powers,

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[2] Telegram 2186 from Saigon, May 13, concerned the possible utilization of Civil Air Transport aircraft. (751G.5/5–1353) Telegram 2218 of May 15 dealt with French Air Force maintenance capabilities. (751G.5/5–1553) Neither telegram is printed.

although they are expressed by inference in Baie d'Along agreements[3] and he has usurped these powers with French support. If political and economic reform measures are to be taken, presidents of Vietnamese Government must not be subject to sudden deposition at whim of Bao Dai. At present Vietnam is an oriental despotism with French accent, Prime Minister being subject to caprice of the black market emperor and not to will of any National Assembly.

I have witnessed departure of two kings within past three years and have yet to see forebodings justified that abdication of these monarchs would spell ruin of country. Bao Dai is not Leopold, but unlike Farouk, who lost at gambling, he makes a fortune from it.

If Bao Dai should be retained, pressure should be exerted on him to permit holding national elections, creation of Constituent Assembly, and drafting by that assembly of constitution, which would make chief of state its servant and not vice versa. If Bao Dai does not assent to these measures he should be told to abdicate in favor of his son who should be brought back with the popular Queen to rule either directly or by regency and under constitution preferably not on French model. If this measure should not prove feasible, we should think in terms of Vietnamese federal republic free of French domination.

(6) Preparations should commence now for submission of Indochina conflict to UN jurisdiction. Once present lull in fighting season ends with monsoon, Viet Minh will recommence operations and may quite possibly reach Mekong thus renewing offensive against Laos and presenting a threat to security of Thailand. In consequence issues which were dodged by French in recent weeks will once more be presented to free world and should not be dodged again. There is, however, a period of some months in which to canvass this situation and to prepare resolute line of action.

III. In economic sphere there are several measures which can be taken:

(1) We should maintain our present MSA counterpart aid program with its emphasis on direct impact, support war effort, and increase in production. Once war is won, there will also be need in areas presently held by Viet Minh for large-scale humanitarian and rehabilitation projects. We should recognize that commodity and counterpart aid may be necessary in this country longer than in most areas.

(2) TCA type activities (e.g., in such fields as public administration) should be greatly expanded, preferably by French in view of difficulty recruiting French-speaking American technicians. If French unable to help, US or UN should be given clear authority to supply French-speaking technicians from any country.

(3) US support for French or Associated States budgets should be in proportion to contribution of such budgets to winning war by more imaginative and more vigorous measures than have thus far been adopted by either French or AS.

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[3] In the Baie d'Along Agreement of June 5, 1948, France recognized the independence of Vietnam within the French Union. For text, see France, *Journal Officiel de la République Française, Lois et Decrets* (Mar. 14, 1953), p. 2409. For an English translation, see Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, vol. I, p. 117.

(4) Every effort should be made to stimulate, where appropriate, local production of both civil and military products and to persuade French concerns to encourage AS participation therein.

This desirable in order give middle class stake in nation's economy.

(5) *Utilization to fullest extent possible of US economic* aid in order soften effects of devaluation.

(6) Associated States desire increased economic relations with other Asian countries, which should be fostered as longrun measure. This measure will run directly afoul vested French interests but is essential if in long run economies of these three kingdoms are to interlock usefully with economies of free nations of Asia. There should be more trade in both directions between IC and Japan, India, Philippines and Indonesia. Many French here still do not recognize that in expanding economy French business could also increase.

These conclusions are offered with all diffidence as they are based on only two months observation in IC. I accept entire responsibility for them but Bartlett and Trapnell concur in general with views set forth and particularly with recommendations in their respective fields.

McClintock

711.5851G/5–1953 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, May 20, 1953—6:33 p. m.

5681. Urtel 5995.[2] Although Defense has not yet determined leadership or size mission, it will probably be led by well known three or four star general outstanding ability and experience and would include representatives Army, Air Force, Navy and CINCPAC; maximum of ten envisaged. Purpose will be (1) to discuss with Navarre US evaluation Letourneau–Allard concept particularly in light developments since it was formulated; (2) to discuss with Navarre present French military plans for reversal current military trend and to secure ideas French military as to requirements for early buildup of striking force available to French High Command in order that US Govt can formulate views as to requirements and (3) to devise ways and means closer and continuing Franco-US contact on plans and operations level, without, of course, impinging on exclusive responsibilities France and Associated States. Decision to accept Mayer invitation send mission reflects as indicated Deptel 5655[3] our concern at military developments and our desire have most efficient use our material assistance both actual and potential well as of MAAG personnel and facilities in accordance best possible plan for successful conclusion hostilities in Indochina.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 2285.

[2] Telegram 5995 from Paris, May 19, concerning the possibility of the United States sending a military mission to Saigon, is not printed. (711.5851G/5–1953)

[3] Dated May 18, p. 570.

SMITH

751.551/5–2153 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, May 21, 1953—12:41 p. m.

5693. Secretary Defense has written Dept to following effect: [2]

"The present situation in Laos has drained the last bit of reserve out of the French Air Force in Indochina, and the near collapse of the maintenance and pilot capabilities of the French Air Force in Indochina is close at hand.

"The Department of Defense has repeatedly advised the French that the current manpower ceiling of ten thousand personnel (including approximately two thousand five hundred guards and ordinary laborers) was totally inadequate to support the number of aircraft operating in French Indochina, and that more French personnel were needed to effectively employ, efficiently utilize and properly maintain the aircraft on hand."

Secretary's letter concludes with request that Dept "make appropriate representation to French Government to induce them to provide needed Air Force supply, maintenance and operational personnel."

Further details this whole situation are contained MAAG Saigon telegram 728–A May first passed MAAG Paris and Deptel 5647.[3]

Approach Pleven earliest opportunity indicating to him primary importance attached by US Govt to remedying this situation which is understood be under study by French Air Ministry. It would be appropriate recall to Pleven that we have on several occasions and at considerable sacrifice to ourselves made planes available on priority basis for use in Indochina but that our air experts consider problem not primarily need for additional planes particularly transport types but need for personnel to maintain and operate planes already available.

This might well be one of topics proposed military mission to Indochina will wish discuss but there would be advantage in pursuing problem at technical level earliest since it appears obvious additional allocation French air force manpower in Indochina is required if maximum effective use this all-important weapon is to be made.

If French Government says it requires prior NATO approval to a diversion of personnel from Europe, US would be prepared support such request. You should comment on this only if French raise issue of NATO approval. Department understands NATO Annual Review indicates surplus French Air Force personnel in Europe in relation available modern aircraft. You may inform Pleven that US Air Force experts available to discuss details this serious situation in Paris, Washington or Saigon. Defense communicating Ridgway[4] this subject.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 2291.

[2] The letter from Secretary of Defense Wilson to Secretary of State Dulles, May 16, is in file 751G.5/5–1653.

[3] Neither printed.

SMITH

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[4] Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, USA, Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

751G.13/5–2153 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 21, 1953—11 p. m.

2273. Repeated information Paris 401, Hanoi, Vientiane, Phnom Penh unnumbered. I called today on President Tam. He developed following points:

1. Although to outward purposes officially displeased, Prime Minister was secretly elated at French unilateral devaluation of piaster without consultation Associated States. He said that although immediate economic and social consequences posed difficult problems Fr action had united Vietnamese public opinion behind government in solidarity which nation had never before known. In consequence he, Tam, could now move forward with greater assurance and daring in developing his program for an ever-increasing measure of independence until that time when Vietnam should be entirely free. Tam said that he was now in position to tell French that they had taken action without consultation and that he too could take action without consultation.

2. On vital question of rice Tam seemed fully confident of his ability to deal with situation. He said that despite very strenuous pressure from French and others, he had resisted and would continue to resist demands that export of rice be permitted. With an embargo on rice exports Prime Minister said there were even surplus stocks in Vietnam and thus law of supply and demand would keep prices low. As for rumor spreading important rice exporters that unless this cereal were exported it would find its way into Viet Minh hands, Tam said this was a canard made up of whole cloth and that he was fully confident Vietnamese and French Union Forces could prevent rice from finding its way into enemy hands.

In view of Tam's confidence that rice problem can be dealt with by internal measures, it now seems probable that contemplated STEM financing of requisitioning may not prove necessary.

3. Tam said that popular outcry was great for measures of relief following devaluation but he was confident that if rice could be kept under control this clamor could successfully be dealt with. He said it would be easy to grant demands for Chamber of Commerce but that to create national bank was more thorny problem "since we have no money." As for rumored transfer of Office des Changes to Vietnamese hands, he said he had this matter under study and favored it in principle since reason for Office des Changes existence had been removed with devaluation.

4. Prime Minister said he had decided to proceed with complementary communal elections on June 28. This coupled with elections held last January would provide wide electoral base for future National Assembly. When asked what reaction of Bao Dai would be to June elections Tam smiled and said that Bao Dai had been opposed to elections in January and that subsequently he had been impressed by popular appeal those elections had exerted. Tam felt particularly in light of national solidarity engendered by French devaluation measure, that even Bao Dai could not successfully oppose his measures for next month and his eventual goal of National Assembly.

5. On agrarian reform, Tam said that in his recent tour of provinces his program had proved popular and he was confident that in this realm as well pressure of public opinion would force some measure of reform. Bao Dai, however, thus far had withheld his assent to decree, as Chief of State was still waiting to assess pressures and opinions.

6. I informed Tam in strictest confidence of my contemplated informal *démarche* tomorrow with Gautier (Embassy telegram 2230, Department telegram 2283).[1] Prime Minister was effusively grateful for this information and support. I cautioned him, however, that our interest was a realistic one as we wished to see Vietnamese budget as much in balance as possible for effective support of war effort.

7. Re Tam's contemplated trip to US I said that in principle Department was in agreement but that timing of visit would require some study. Tam himself said that under present circumstances he could not stay more than three days away from his office and was quite content that scheduled visit would not take place in near future. He agreed (last paragraph Embassy telegram 2228, May 16) [2] that no publicity should be given to contemplated journey at present.

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[1] In telegram 2230 from Saigon, May 16, not printed, McClintock expressed the intention to raise with High Commissioner Gautier the question of a surtax which affected Vietnamese firms but not French firms. (851G.11/5–1653) In telegram 2283 to Saigon, May 16, the Department of State concurred in that course of action. (851G.11/5–1653)

[2] In telegram 2228 from Saigon, May 16, not printed, McClintock reported having discussed the proposed Tam visit with Letourneau who pointed out that the matter was delicate because of Bao Dai's extreme jealousy. (751G.13/5–1653)

8. Re Lieberman's interview which presumably has now been published in *New York Times*[3] Tam said he did not propose to follow Cambodian examples. He said Cambodians were apt to fly off the handle but his plan was deeper, more subtle, and would be steadfastly pursued. In other words, Tam is consolidating gains made very quietly and is planning a long-range campaign to utilize forces of nationalism recently released by French devaluation measure to sustain his own program and, in proportion as it succeeds, to evolve complete independence from France.

McCLINTOCK

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[3] Presumably a reference to an article in the *New York Times* of May 20 (p. 4) by Henry R. Lieberman, "Indochina Issues Confront Navarre," in which Premier Nguyen Van Tam was quoted with regard to devaluation of the piaster and other aspects of French–Vietnamese relations.

751G.00/5–2353 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, May 23, 1953—2 p. m.

6082. Repeated information Saigon 271, London unnumbered. Embassy is forwarding in immediately following telegram brief summary recent comment on French policy Indo China taken from non-Communist French press.[1] Comment noteworthy in that it shows increasing volume and attention devoted to question of solution for IC problem with more stress than in past being laid by some non-Communist newspapers on negotiated settlements as means permit French withdrawal. Lead in this campaign is for moment in hands of neutralist organs, such as *Le Monde*, latter apparently endeavoring build up pressure for negotiated withdrawal. It is no longer case of fairly isolated voice of Mendes-France advancing his withdrawal theory but that of other voices calling for negotiations, such as Servan-Schreiber family and even Edgar Faure. Rightist *Aurore* joins in partially with editorial (said to have been written by chief shareholder) saying hour for "relief" has come and France should now think of herself. There is difference in views on negotiations. Mendes-France and *Le Monde's* Servan-Schreiber look to negotiations with Ho Chi-Minh as means permitting French withdrawal while Edgar Faure calls for five-power negotiations, including Communist China, and does not mention withdrawal.

Other straws in wind come from newly published weekly *L'Express* (Embassy despatch 2580, May 22),[2] product Servan-Schreiber family, whose first issue last week carried article by Mendes-France with usual appeal for negotiations and whose second issue today carries as lead article alleged portions Devinat parliamentary report on IC deleted from report, this section under title "reasons for failure of our policy." Mitterand of UDSR has also recently commented publicly on IC and is one of chief interpellators and critics of government policy in IC in National Assembly.

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[1] Telegram 6083 from Paris, May 23, not printed, reported a build-up of press support for a negotiated settlement. (751G.00/5–2353)

[2] Despatch 2580 from Paris, May 22, concerning the publication of a new weekly, *L'Express*, is not printed. (951.61/5–2253)

Rumors of critical nature of Devinat parliamentary report, Viet Minh invasion Laos, recent difficulties with Cambodians, considerable publicity given "piastre scandal" ending in devaluation and accompanying protests from Associated States, recrudescence Viet Minh military activity in Delta Tonkin, rumors Letourneau resignation and continued delay in naming Commissioner General IC have all contributed to focusing attention anew on IC and to strengthening malaise re this ever present problem. Despite increased US aid and efforts build up Associated States Armies, French generally see no end in sight to IC conflict and view French effort there as drain and formidable obstacle to fulfillment French obligations and commitment in Europe.

At this juncture campaign to build up support for policy negotiated withdrawal may be expected to fall on more responsive ears than would have been case at any time since US aid programs began and Delattre initiated his redressment campaign. On other hand, despite aspects situation engendering malaise at this time, there are positive elements which should make for more rather than less optimism. In contrast with situation two years ago at time Delattre arrival IC, US aid has increased to considerable volume (leading to recent comment, for example, by *Le Monde* correspondent IC that US has furnished all matériel necessary and that "parks overflow with planes and tanks," real problem being that of manpower); Associated States Armies have now been built up to sizable numbers and plans under way to create commando battalions; and position Associated States Governments internationally greatly augmented and internal powers increasingly turned over to them.

In this situation there is an important psychological problem both in IC and in France. Thus, US actions and words assume considerable importance in relation to French reactions to IC problem. There is no doubt that US aid is an essential element in continuation of French effort in IC and any indication we give of support for French position plays part in encouraging French to continue fight. For this reason, US furnishing of C–119 transport planes was timely contribution materially and psychologically, as was also in psychological sense US concern and outspoken denunciation Viet Minh aggression against Laos.

In light of foregoing, we conclude that while campaign described above appears directed toward change in French policy in IC, it has not reached dangerous proportions even though support for negotiated settlement now comes from new quarters. One of factors most conducive to sentiment for withdrawal has been and continues to be lack of basis for hope of real victory. Prospect has been one of indefinite struggle and effort in what has been regarded by many as at best a holding operation. This pessimistic view was dispelled by Delattre's dynamism but events of past year, particularly recent weeks, have served to revive this feeling. If same sense of hope could again be established by change of command, both military and civil, coupled with US assistance and support, sentiment for withdrawal should again recede. With new French military command team just taking over, there should be lessening effectiveness of efforts of advocates of negotiation while a new look is taken by new commanders leading to possibilities greater offensive spirit. It should be kept in mind also that Devinat and his group did not, so far as we know, advocate negotiations or withdrawal; in conversations with us Devinat put emphasis on transfers of authority to Associated States and accelerated formation national armies. Debate on IC in National Assembly, if it comes after formation new government, should give some indication of extent to which supporters of negotiation have made headway. In interim, there should be lull in attention to IC problem and rainy season should provide similar lull in military operations, thus providing breathing spell for supporters of general outlines of present policy and taking heat off government for time being. In this interim, however, government must come to some decision with respect to its own long-range policy for IC, a decision which must carry with it hope for solution of IC problem, if it is to be able to face successfully its critics in the Assembly.

DILLON

751G.5/5-2353 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, May 23, 1953—6 p. m.

6087. Repeated information Saigon 273. I discussed Deptel 5693 [1] with Pleven Friday.[2] He was in a discouraged mood because of governmental crisis which he deplored saying that bulk of National Assembly deputies simply did not realize urgency of situation.[3] On immediate air force personnel situation both in Indochina and elsewhere he said he simply did not know what the answer was. He reviewed the air force personnel situation along the lines of Embtel 6027.[4] He stated that immediately after NATO meeting he had ordered a complete survey of French air force in light of US views that France could and should produce more modern first line squadrons for NATO by cutting back sharply on obsolescent squadrons now in service. Final report on this study due next week but preliminary indications are that study will show that very little can be done in way of eliminating obsolescent squadrons as they are necessary and useful for transportation and security purposes in North Africa and elsewhere in French Union.

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[1] Dated May 21, p. 576.

[2] May 22.

[3] On May 21, the government of René Mayer fell when the National Assembly refused to grant its request for special powers to carry out its financial policies. No new government was formed for more than a month.

He then said that French Government realized fully the importance of air in Indochina. Because of this General Bodet, a senior air General formerly at SHAPE, had been appointed as assistant CINC for Indochina to rank second to Navarre. Bodet leaving Sunday for Indochina and his views will carry considerably greater weight than previous French air force recommendations from Indochina. He also said new air force commander in Indochina General Lauzin was top man.

He did not raise question of NATO approval mentioned in last paragraph of reference telegram. I hope this question will not arise at all since any too ready indication that we were agreeable weakening NATO forces in Europe might have serious adverse repercussions on EDC prospects. Will telegraph further on political implications after consulting with USDel–SHAPE.

DILLON

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[4] Telegram 6027 from Paris, May 20, concerning French Air Force personnel difficulties, is not printed. (751G.5/5–2053)

751G.00/5–2453 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 24, 1953—9 p. m.

2298. Repeated Paris 412, Hanoi, Vientiane, Phnom Penh unnumbered. Tam gave banquet last night for Letourneau who departs on Tuesday.[1] Atmosphere was one of gloom on French side and of overt vindictive elation on Vietnamese side. Tam delivered brief two-edged speech in which expressions of gratitude and friendship for France were heavily laced by conditional clauses. Letourneau responded like a beaten man. His first words were, "you confront a Minister who has resigned". He expressed regret at leaving Indochina with his goals not reached and with battle half won.

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[1] May 26.

In an earlier conversation with MacDonald,[2] latter told me that Letourneau had voiced great relief that downfall of Mayer government would postpone debate on Indochina, he hoped to a sufficiently remote date so that US Congress would already have voted credits for aid before French Parliament turned critical gaze on situation here.

In general MacDonald expressed pessimism as result his tour Indochina. He voiced certitude that Viet Minh would resume offensive against Laos at end of Monsoon, his disquiet over seeming incapacity of French Commanders to gain military initiative.

General Trapnell and I have been wondering if it is part of conscious French policy so to hamstring commanders in this theatre that war will go from bad to worse on desperate hypothesis that US will thus be forced to come to rescue and eventually to replace French in this conflict. Trapnell tells me that he can cite at least six occasions in recent months where from point of view of sound military tactics French Command could have taken effective action, but in his phrase "dragged their feet". US correspondents have also expressed their concern that French possibly are following a deliberate plan to lure us into Indochina war. Trapnell and I feel that test of French sincerity will be whether or not Navarre adopts a more positive attitude toward the war. If new French leadership continues lethargy of old we shall be forced to take a very close look at motivation in Paris.

Dilemma is, of course, that war can only be won by effective use of Vietnam forces and Vietnam forces will not win war unless they are fighting for complete freedom which French will not underwrite. It is therefore a good time for mission cited Department telegram 5681 to Paris [3] to arrive in this theatre.

McCLINTOCK

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[2] Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner-General for the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia, visited Indochina and Thailand from May 21 to 28. His impressions of the situation in the Associated States as conveyed to Consul General Baldwin were reported in despatch 927 from Singapore, May 29, 1953, not printed. (751G.00/5-2953)

[3] Dated May 20, p. 575.

751G.00/5-2653 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, May 26, 1953—7 p. m.

2318. Repeated Paris 421, Hanoi unnumbered. Embassy officer drew out Offroy today on his views Indochina situation. Commenting on tide defeatism surging in France Offroy said his personal estimate was that so long as possibility Korean truce and Far East settlement existed, French should work towards having such settlement extended to Indochina. (Embassy officers impression is that this Micawberish hope that something will turn up to rescue France from tight position it now finds itself plays large part in French thinking.) If no Korean settlement reached Offroy felt that in six months French weariness with Indochina war would reach critical point. Alternatives then would be seek negotiation with Viet Minh or turn Indochina burden over to US.

Asked whether better course for France might not be to take now steps to satisfy Associated States nationalism with view winning increased measure support from anti-Communist elements Associated States, Offroy shrugged shoulders saying that support Indochina war came from French elements who opposed concessions to Associated States, change would entail reversal entire basis French Government Indochina policy. To suggest alternatives postulated by him would mean even greater blow to French presence Indochina, Offroy agreed but thought it too much to expect vested interests supporting Indochina war effort to exercise foresight.

In view possibility Reynaud may become Prime Minister believe interesting Offroy comment Reynaud favors turning Indochina problems over to US.

McClintock

751G.00/5–2953 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, May 29, 1953—8 p. m.
[Received 9:08 p. m.]

6184. Repeated information Saigon 281, London unnumbered. Saigon telegram 2256, May 20 (Paris 394, London 45). We agree with Saigon's suggestion re stock-taking at this juncture, particularly as French civil and military command changing and increasing attention being given here to IC, where, as Saigon says, end seems as far from sight as ever. At time when IC problem may be aired fully in National Assembly, and may play part in formation new government, and at time United States Congress on verge considering United States aid programs, we should take new and close look at IC problem.

Question is how to get across to French effectively our ideas of things they should do to turn tide in IC. If we were to sit down with French and give them list of particulars such as that outlined in reftel, they would probably conclude we were trying to "run the show" and net result would be French resentment and risk they might decide time had come let us do just that—i.e., "run the show" or take over. To suggest in piecemeal fashion measures such as those outlined would be to settle [*unsettle*] French and dissipate our influence and opportunity for pressure. What is required is overall review of entire picture with view to coming up with new ideas of what can be done to change overall situation. Measures would naturally have to be within limits capabilities France, Associated States and United States, materially, politically and psychologically. Important thing is to do utmost toward satisfying IC nationalist aspirations without at same time destroying or weakening French will and determination continue effort.

We think there should be at earliest possible appropriate moment high level discussion with French re where they are headed and what they expect to do, leaving details aside to extent possible on our side, unless we are asked for specific ideas of what should be done, and concentrating on broad aspects of problem. These should include basic concept of conduct of war in terms of strategy, training of native forces and uses of national armies and local militia. A beginning was made in this direction when Letourneau was asked in Washington present French plan for conduct of war. Coming military mission to IC should permit these discussions to be carried to conclusion. On political and economic side, we should explore situation with French to see what measures can and should be taken to obtain maximum political advantage in IC which would do most to undercut Viet Minh. It should be made clear to French in advance of such talks that we consider our aid program and interest in area warrantable thoroughly frank exchange of views re these matters and say our present concern arises from apparent continued stalemate in most fields despite increased effort on all sides, including, of course, United States aid programs.

Conversations along these lines would have to be at high level if we are to obtain from French authoritative statement their policy and aims. It would be essential to include Minister of Associated States, whoever he may be. If such talks were held here would suggest that they be with Foreign Minister and Minister Associated States and would hope that Heath and Bonsal could be present assist me in discussions. It would appear desirable to inform French in advance orally of fields of discussion we have in mind without, however, drawing up formal written agenda which would then probably become matter for Cabinet discussion and might precipitate wave of criticism United States interference leading to pressure for pulling out and letting United States have responsibility for IC. Whole matter is somewhat delicate and we must keep in mind, leaving aside degree of justification therefor, French sensitivity to what could be construed as outside interference in internal matters. Whole exercise should be intended to permit, or rather to require, French to take stock of where they are headed and what end they see in sight and to permit United States to offer suggestions or recommendations for action we believe helpful. To that end United States side will, of course, have to have clear idea of what it believes necessary. Saigon reftel and Saigon Despatch 528, May 21,[1] furnished me excellent points for consideration by United States side in its approach to problem.

Timing is important element. We doubt that we could obtain French assent to political and economic talks until new government formed and National Assembly debate on IC is either ended or postponed indefinitely. To push for talks before these events might be to add to pressures on France to cut losses and unload IC burden on United States as such pressures might be augmented by French view that United States intervening more and more in IC affairs.

DILLON

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[1] Despatch 528 from Saigon, May 21, titled "A Political Action Program" and containing various suggestions for improving the situation in Indochina, is not printed. (751G.00/5–2153)

751G.13/5–2953 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET

HANOI, May 29, 1953—6 p. m.
[Received May 30—4 : 30 a. m.]

784. Department pass Saigon, Paris; repeated information Saigon 627, Paris 376. Reference Consulate telegram 779.[1] In course of long conversation describing steps leading to his appointment as Minister of National Defense, Phan-Huy-Quat [2] spoke with great frankness of Bao Dai, his character, weaknesses, strategy, how he is considered by the people, his entourage and Emperor's evaluation of French and US policy toward Indochina.

Quat said that in judging Bao Dai, one must remember he is an oriental prince whose life has been spent under surveillance by the French or persons acceptable to the French. He is accordingly mistrustful of everyone, in varying degrees, never speaks his whole mind to anyone, and confides, up to a point, only in those he considers devoted to himself and the nation's independence. Although possessed of quick native intelligence, Bao Dai is ill-informed on most subjects, afflicted with "Royal laziness" and given to self-indulgence. He knows he is harshly judged for his inactivity not only by French and Americans but also by many of his own people whose good opinion he would value. Until he feels, however, that on adopting a policy of action he can be sure of serving the national interest with no risk of being used as a French cat's-paw, Bao Dai will remain aloof. Quat says that if the French and the US receive his military plan favorably, Bao Dai will interpret that reception as the signal to abandon his reserve and gradually re-enter public life. Bao Dai, he says, is purely concerned with the military establishment and cares nothing for the external trappings of sovereignty; he is aware that Tam is working against him, but with a shrug he said to Quat "I shall take care of Tam at the proper moment".

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[1] Telegram 779 from Hanoi, May 28, which reported on Bao Dai's plans for the development of the Vietnamese National Army, is not printed. (751G.13/5–2853)

[2] The appointment of Dr. Phan Huy Quat, a leader of the Dai Viet Party, as Minister of Defense was announced on June 4.

With regard to Bao Dai's transfers of funds abroad, Quat said these are not inspired by personal greed, but have an important policy aspect. To have money outside the control of French in Indochina gives Bao Dai a degree of independence not enjoyed by his imperial predecessors, many of whom ended their days deposed and impoverished. Quat reported hearing a Frenchman, whom he did not identify, say the French were obliged handle Bao Dai with care since he has large holdings outside Vietnam. Quat said also that although Bao Dai has profited from Empress absence from country, fact that she and Royal children are absent is only another aspect of this same policy, objective of which is to prevent Bao Dai and his family from becoming French hostages.

Bao Dai has always been suspicious of French intentions toward Vietnam, said Quat, and has been slapped down so often that his mistrust in power army indelible. He has been moved to present his military plan at this time "as a last effort" because he believes France to be so weak and so greatly in need of a formula capable of providing an acceptable solution to the problem of Vietnam, that a responsible French Government can hardly turn him down. If he meets with friendly reception in Paris, Vietnam's relations with France will enter a new and promising phase. If his plan is rejected, however, Bao Dai "will take other dispositions" a phrase Quat would not undertake to define but which he feels would bode ill not only for Vietnam but also for the stake that the West has in Indochina.

With regard to the US, Quat said that Bao Dai has been unable determine in his own mind exactly what American policy is toward Vietnam. While he appreciates and accepts American reliance on French aid in the defense of Western Europe, he is puzzled by what he considers failure of US fully to support Vietnam's aspirations to more nearly complete independence precisely in those spheres, particularly the military, where a strong Vietnam would be invaluable not only to France but to the Western cause generally. In this connection Bao Dai is especially anxious to know what will be the American reaction to his military plan. A timely gesture of encouragement by the US, said Quat, may mark the turning point in this year.

STURM

751G.00/6–153

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] June 1, 1953.

Subject: Thailand's proposed appeal to the Security Council.

Participants: The Secretary of State
His Excellency, the French Ambassador
Mr. John D. Hickerson (for the second half of the conversation)

The French Ambassador came in to see me in connection with Thailand's proposed appeal to the Security Council. The Ambassador urged that I accept and advise Thailand to accept the French proposal that Thailand merely send a letter to the Security Council calling attention to the recent threat to Thailand growing out of the invasion of Laos, stating that the threat has for the present subsided, and putting the Security Council on notice that Thailand will raise this case again and expect prompt action if the threat reappears.

I told the French Ambassador that it seemed to me that Thailand was wise in presenting this case to the Security Council and asking for action to provide observers under a subcommittee of the Peace Observation Commission. I told the Ambassador that the whole purpose of that part of the "Uniting for Peace" resolution of 1950 was to take timely action which in itself would serve to deter aggression and, if aggression occurred, would enable UN observers to report the facts to the UN. I told the Ambassador that it seemed to me that the time to take this action was precisely during this lull when there is an opportunity to get observers in the field before anything happens and not wait until aggression has actually occurred.

The Ambassador said that his government felt strongly that the case should not now be raised in the Security Council. He said that the threat to Thailand had subsided and could not in any event be renewed before next September or October because of weather conditions. He repeated the arguments which he has used before in discussing this case in the Department. He mentioned the sensitiveness of French public opinion over possible criticism of French colonial policy in Indochina and elsewhere. He referred to the feeling in some quarters of the French Government (which he said he personally did not share) that discussing the case in the Security Council might be an invitation to intervention with force in Vietnam and Laos and perhaps Thailand. He also referred to the possibility that raising the Thailand case in the Security Council might fan the considerable amount of feeling in France that the whole Indochinese problem should be dumped in the lap of the UN and that France should thereafter withdraw from Indochina. He did not so far as I am aware advance any new arguments.

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[1] Drafted by John D. Hickerson, Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs.

I told the Ambassador that we had respected his government's judgment about not taking the Laos case or the Indochinese problem generally to the UN although I have not fully agreed with it. I said that I could not for the life of me see how his government could reasonably object to Thailand's asking for action by the Security Council which it thought would contribute to Thailand's security. I added that in my judgment observers of the Peace Observation Commission in Thailand might contribute more to Thailand's security than either France or the United States would be able to contribute in the event aggression actually occurred against Thailand.

Notwithstanding all of this, I told the Ambassador that I could understand the difficulties of the situation growing out of the fact that in this interim period when they are trying to form a new government in France, the matter presents unusual difficulties. I said I would therefore give friendly advice to the Thailand Government to delay its action until a new French Government is formed and there is opportunity for an exchange of views with the new French Government about this matter. I made it as clear as I could to the Ambassador that this is delay and in no sense an abandonment of the action. I stated flatly to the Ambassador that I felt at the outset that Thailand's action in taking this matter to the Security Council was wise and that I still felt that it was wise. I also said that of course the final decision in this matter was that of Thailand and not of the U.S.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

751J.00/6–153 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Thailand [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, June 1, 1953—6:59 p. m.

2297. Deptel 462 to USUN New York, rptd Paris 5780, Bangkok 2261.[2] Secretary today asked Thai Ambassador postpone submission case re Laos invasion to SC this time. Thai Ambassador said he would refer matter to his government but would in any case postpone action which he had planned take tomorrow.

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Repeated to USUN at New York for information as telegram 470, to Paris as 5823, and to Saigon as 2356.

[2] In telegram 462 to New York, May 30, not printed, the Department of State advised USUN that the French were again seeking the help of the United States in dissuading Thailand from submitting the question of the invasion of Laos to the Security Council. (751G.00/5–2753)

French attitude regarding Thai appeal has been emphatic almost to point of hysteria. In view delicate political situation Paris surrounding formation new government, Secretary felt it desirable avoid any action which might provoke ill-considered French statement. He has therefore deferred to Ambassador Bonnet's urgent request that he ask Thai Government postpone action for present. There are after all some months bad weather before danger to Laos and hence to Thailand can again become acute.

Soon as new French Government formed Secretary intends resume exchange views this subject and will keep close touch with Thai Government whose attitude and cooperation are deeply appreciated here. Thai Ambassador replying to press queries to effect case continues under preparation.

DULLES

751G.00/6–253 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, June 2, 1953—5 p. m.

2363. Rptd Paris 432, Hanoi unnumbered. Candidature Mendes-France [1] and attention focused on Indochina have given rise to grave misgivings among French here. While general feeling is Mendes-France will not get Premiership, manifestation strong tide sweeping France to be rid Indochina burden even to extent negotiating with Commies disturbing to them in that, even if Mendes-France does not succeed, it is symptomatic public opinion trend reversal of which they do not see.

On other hand Vietnamese officials and intellectuals give outward appearance of being surprisingly insensitive to portents this trend in France. Efforts to elicit reactions evoke replies in generalities. Those who have cooperated closely with French seem reluctant to speculate and give impression they expect something turn up. Those of more nationalist leanings sound off that if French assistance withdrawn Vietnamese will rely on their own resources but seem to have no clear idea ways and means. Implicit in attitude most Vietnamese is confidence US will step in breach.

MCCLINTOCK

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[1] On May 29, Pierre Mendès-France, a leader of the Radical Socialist Party and an advocate of a negotiated withdrawal from Indochina, accepted the invitation of President Auriol to form a government. On June 3, Mendès-France outlined his policy before the National Assembly. He did not present a detailed solution for the problem of Indochina, but he did contend that the burden of the war had to be reduced and that France should submit a plan for ending the conflict to its American and British allies. For the record of his presentation, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1953, Débats*, pp. 2906–2912. On June 5, Mendès-France failed by 13 votes to achieve the Assembly majority necessary for investiture (301 to 119 with 191 abstentions). For additional documentation on the French governmental crisis, see volume VI.

751G.5/5–2353 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, June 3, 1953—4:46 p. m.

5846. Department confident you will continue make best efforts toward remedying situation described Deptel 5693 rptd Saigon 2291.[2] Raising current manpower ceiling French Air Force Indochina considered of primary importance by US Govt.

Department has been impressed by your discussion NATO aspects and hopes issue will not be raised by French.

Essence of IS position in AR, supported by US, was that French maintaining large number aircraft not needed for or suitable for NATO tasks, thereby tying up trained FAF personnel which could otherwise be available for higher priority tasks. Specifically, IS recommends French increase NATO AF targets and find funds and personnel through scrapping obsolescent aircraft. Since French as Embtel 6087 [3] indicated and as they warned at April NAC, in effect rejecting NATO recommendation, it appears reasonable assume French could make available needed trained men for Indochina without in any way affecting NATO forces.

If however French should raise question reduction French NATO commitments in relation raising personnel manpower ceiling FAF Indochina, you should make no comment this time but refer matter Department for consideration light situation then existent.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Charles W. Adair, NATO Adviser in the Office of European Regional Affairs, and Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 2365.

[2] Dated May 21, p. 576.

[3] Dated May 23, p. 581.

Secretary's Letters, lot 56 D 459

Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President [1]

[WASHINGTON,] June 3, 1953.

Subject: Visit of Prime Minister of Viet-Nam

I recommend that an official invitation be extended about June 15 to the Prime Minister of Viet-Nam, Mr. Nguyen Van Tam, to visit Washington at your convenience during the summer or early autumn of 1953.

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[1] This memorandum was drafted by Robert E. Hoey, Officer in Charge of Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Affairs. The text was transmitted to Secretary Dulles for approval by Assistant Secretary Robertson with a covering memorandum of May 29, not printed. (Secretary's Letters, lot 56 D 459)

Mr. Nguyen Van Tam has been Prime Minister of Viet-Nam since June 1952, and has been responsible for a considerable strengthening of that government's fight against the Communist forces seeking its destruction. He has been responsible for his government's having more than doubled its previous defense budget, has made plans for a substantial augmentation of his National Army, has caused the first post war municipal elections to be held and is now engaged in sponsoring agricultural reform measures which should add substantially to the strength and popularity of his government.

An invitation for him to visit Washington as the official guest of this government would add to Viet-Nam's international position as well as giving encouragement to the progressive measures which he is carrying out.[2]

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

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[2] A note from Secretary Dulles (drafted by Special Assistant O'Connor) to the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, June 10, indicates that President Eisenhower had approved proceeding with the invitation, having been informed by Dulles that the matter had been cleared with the French. (751G.13/6–1053)

INR–NIE files

National Intelligence Estimate

SECRET

WASHINGTON, 4 June 1953.

NIE 91

PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA THROUGH MID-1954[1]

THE PROBLEM

To estimate French Union and Communist capabilities and probable courses of action with respect to Indochina and the internal situation throughout Indochina through mid-1954.

ASSUMPTION

There is no major expansion of the Korean war.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Unless there is a marked improvement in the French Union military position in Indochina, political stability in the Associated

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[1] According to a note on the cover sheet, "The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff. The Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 26 May 1953. The FBI abstained, the subject being outside of its jurisdiction."

The cover sheet also indicates that this estimate superseded NIE 35, "Probable Developments in Indochina During the Remainder of 1951," Aug. 7, 1951 (for text, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 469); NIE 35/1, "Probable Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1952," Mar. 3, 1952 (for text, see p. 53); and NIE 35/2, "Probable Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1953," Aug. 29, 1952 (for text, see p. 243).

States and popular support of the French Union effort against the Viet Minh will decline. We believe that such marked improvement in the military situation is not likely, though a moderate improvement is possible. The over-all French Union position in Indochina therefore will probably deteriorate during the period of this estimate.

2. The lack of French Union military successes, continuing Indochinese distrust of ultimate French political intentions, and popular apathy will probably continue to prevent a significant increase in Indochinese will and ability to resist the Viet Minh.

3. We cannot estimate the impact of the new French military leadership. However, we believe that the Viet Minh will retain the military initiative and will continue to attack territory in the Tonkin delta and to make incursions into areas outside the delta. The Viet Minh will attempt to consolidate Communist control in "Free Laos" and will build up supplies in northern Laos to support further penetrations and consolidation in that country. The Viet Minh will almost certainly intensify political warfare, including guerrilla activities, in Cambodia.

4. Viet Minh prestige has been increased by the military successes of the past year, and the organizational and administrative effectiveness of the regime will probably continue to grow.

5. The French Government will remain under strong and increasing domestic pressure to reduce the French military commitment in Indochina, and the possibility cannot be excluded that this pressure will be successful. However, we believe that the French will continue without enthusiasm to maintain their present levels of troop strength through mid-1954 and will support the planned development of the national armies of the Associated States.

6. We believe that the Chinese Communists will continue and possibly increase their present support of the Viet Minh. However, we believe that whether or not hostilities are concluded in Korea, the Chinese Communists will not invade Indochina during this period.* The Chinese Communists will almost certainly retain the capability to intervene so forcefully in Indochina as to overrun most of the Tonkin delta area before effective assistance could be brought to bear.

7. We believe that the Communist objective to secure control of all Indochina will not be altered by an armistice in Korea or by Communist "peace" tactics. However, the Communists may decide that "peace" maneuvers in Indochina would contribute to the attainment of Communist global objectives, and to the objective of the Viet Minh.

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*The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that the intelligence available is insufficient to permit a conclusion at this time that the Chinese Communists will or will not invade Indochina prior to mid-1954. [Footnote in the source text.]

8. If present trends in the Indochinese situation continue through mid-1954, the French Union political and military position may subsequently deteriorate very rapidly.

DISCUSSION

The Current Situation

9. *Military Situation.*† The Viet Minh occupation of the mountainous Thai country of northwestern Tonkin in late 1952 and the follow-up thrust into northern Laos in April 1953 demonstrate that the Viet Minh have retained the military initiative in Indochina. Although the Viet Minh did not defeat any large French Union forces in these operations, they did force the French to withdraw the bulk of their offensive striking power from the Tonkin delta and disperse it in isolated strong points, dependent on air transport for logistic support. At the same time, strong Viet Minh guerrilla elements plus two regular Viet Minh divisions sufficed to contain the 114,000 regular French Union forces remaining in the Tonkin delta. The Viet Minh now appear to have withdrawn the bulk of their regular forces from Laos. They probably have left behind political cadres, some regular forces, and well-supplied guerrilla units in the areas which they overran in order to consolidate Communist political and military control, to prepare bases for future operations, and to pin down French Union garrisons.

10. The invasion of Laos may have been undertaken as part of a long-range Communist design to develop unrest in Thailand and ultimately gain control of all Southeast Asia. Viewed solely in terms of the Viet Minh objective to win all of Indochina, however, the Viet Minh offensive in Laos is an extension of the 1952 winter's offensive in northwestern Tonkin, and represents a shift in Viet Minh military tactics. This shift in tactics is probably largely explained by the inability to defeat the main French Union forces in the Tonkin delta by direct assault. Faced with this position of strength, the Viet Minh began during 1952 to turn the bulk of their regular forces toward the conquest of northwestern Tonkin and northern Laos, areas lightly held by isolated French Union garrisons.

11. In this manner, the Viet Minh probably hope to retain the military and political initiative and, by dispersing French Union forces, to prevent either a clean-up by the French Union in the Tonkin delta or offensive operations by the French Union against Viet Minh troop

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†See Annex A for Estimated French Union Strengths and Dispositions;
See Annex B for Estimated Viet Minh Strengths and Dispositions;
See Annex C for French Far Eastern Air Force Strengths and Dispositions; and
See Annex D for French Far Eastern Naval Strengths and Dispositions. [Footnote in the source text. The annexes are not printed here; for texts, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 54–58.]

concentrations and supply installations outside the delta. The Viet Minh may well believe that by gradually extending their base areas in lightly defended regions of Laos, Cambodia, and central Vietnam they can keep French Union forces dispersed and pinned down indefinitely. In time, they probably expect to sap the morale of the Vietnamese and the French and finally so alter the balance of power as to make possible successful Viet Minh attacks against the key areas of Tonkin and south Vietnam.

12. The deployment of four divisions into Laos by the Viet Minh and the fact that the French did not attack their long and exposed lines of communication typify the over-all situation in Indochina. French Union forces still outweigh the Viet Minh in numbers, firepower, and matériel. French ability to air lift troops and equipment, although strained at the present time, provides the French Union with tactical flexibility in planning defensive and offensive operations. The Viet Minh, however, by their skill in guerrilla war, their ability to move rapidly and to infiltrate and control areas under nominal French occupation, have caused the French to commit large forces throughout Indochina to static defense, thus seriously reducing French ability to take the offensive.

13. Viet Minh regular forces in northern Indochina have continued their gradual evolution from lightly armed guerrilla bands to a regularly organized military force. They have made noticeable advances in the development of field communications, and unit firepower has increased although they still possess only limited amounts of artillery. Viet Minh combat effectiveness is still limited by a lack of medical supplies and an inability to sustain major military operations.

14. Military aid from the US has enabled the French Union to equip adequately their regular ground forces. The French air forces, with US logistical support, and with no air opposition, have maintained a fair degree of effectiveness in paratroop operations, supply by air drops, and daylight attacks on enemy supply dumps. French naval forces have improved in combat effectiveness and have maintained control of the seacoasts and inland waterways. However, the Viet Minh have the continuing capability to threaten control of the inland waterways by a mining campaign. Some Vietnamese National Army units have performed creditably in combat, but desertion and "missing in action" figures remain high. For the most part, Vietnamese National Guard and other local security forces lack the firepower, discipline, and leadership to hold positions alone against regular Viet Minh units which infiltrate the Tonkin delta.

15. Although French Union military capabilities have improved slightly, the French Union military effort has been inhibited by considerations of domestic French politics, French security in Europe,

and fear of involvement in a war with Communist China. These considerations have caused French commanders in Indochina to forego aggressive military operations that would entail heavy casualties and have prevented them from obtaining reinforcements on a scale that might make possible the defeat of the Viet Minh.

16. The development of the Vietnamese National Army, promised by the French in 1949, has been retarded by a shortage of officers and non-commissioned officers, by French lack of faith in the Vietnamese and by French fiscal problems. There has also been an unwillingness among many Vietnamese leaders, not including Premier Tam, to undertake a major mobilization effort until the French grant further political concessions and until the Vietnamese character of the new army is fully guaranteed.

17. *Political.* Some political progress has been made in Vietnam during the past year. Premier Tam's administration has enlisted the cooperation of the strongly nationalist Dai Viet leader Nguyen Huu Tri, and nationalist concern over Tam's francophilia has to some extent dissipated. Tam has also added to the political vitality of Vietnam by holding local elections in secure areas of Vietnam. Another Vietnamese program, undertaken with US economic assistance, which involves the relocation of scattered villages in the delta into centralized and defensible sites may be an important step toward the eventual "pacification" of heavily infiltrated areas. The decisions of March 1953 to increase the size of the Vietnamese National Army while expanding the area of Vietnamese strategic and operational responsibility, could also be of major political significance.

18. Despite these advances, Vietnam still lacks the degree of political strength essential for the mobilization of the country's resources. Tam's "action" program remains more shadow than substance. Elected local councils have no real power, promised land reform and other social and economic reforms which might generate popular support have not left the planning stage, and the Vietnamese government is handicapped by incompetent cabinet ministers and the lack of competent administrators. While Bao Dai refuses to assume active direction of the affairs of state, he remains hostile toward new leadership and democratic activities.

19. Of more basic importance in the failure of Vietnamese to rally to the Vietnamese government following the French grant of independence within the French Union in 1949 have been the following:

a. Many Vietnamese doubt the ability of French Union forces to defeat the Viet Minh and prefer to remain apart from the struggle.

b. The French Government has not dared to promise complete national independence at some future date, as demanded by the Vietnamese, because of the fear that the French national assembly would then refuse to support a war in a "lost" portion of the French Union.

c. The Vietnamese, despite many evolutionary steps toward complete independence since 1949, are generally inclined to believe that the French intend to retain effective control over the affairs of Vietnam.

d. The nationalist appeal and military prestige of the Viet Minh remains strong among significant numbers of the Vietnamese.

20. In Cambodia, internal political strife has weakened the government, dissident nationalist elements have continued to sap popular loyalty to the throne, and the King is demanding greater independence from the French in order to strengthen his political position at home. Meanwhile, the 9,000 Viet Minh combatants in Cambodia, while under fairly constant attack by French and Cambodian forces, are capable of exploiting disorders which may develop.

21. Laotian stability has been upset by the recent Viet Minh incursion. The Laotians are generally hostile to the Viet Minh but are unable to contribute a great deal to the defense of their homeland. A small group of pro-Communist Laotians returned to Laos with the Viet Minh during the recent incursion. It is led by a disaffected Laotian nobleman, Prince Souphanouvong, and calls itself the "Free Government of Pathet Lao" (Laos).

22. Meanwhile, the Viet Minh leadership, with Chinese Communist material and advisory assistance since 1949, has demonstrated the necessary zeal, ruthlessness, and tenacity to exploit to the maximum the limited resources at their command. The Viet Minh have expanded the area under their complete control and their prestige has probably increased throughout Indochina as a result of military successes in northwest Tonkin and Laos.

23. In the areas of Viet Minh occupation, Viet Minh control is believed to be effective, and minimum food requirements are being met. The Viet Minh have taken on increasingly the conventional characteristics of a "Peoples Republic" and are now engaged in programs to confiscate and redistribute land and to eliminate "traitors" and "reactionaries." Although this departure from national front tactics has increased realization that the Viet Minh are under complete Communist domination, the Viet Minh control many villages within areas of nominal French Union occupation through terror, compulsion, and their continued nationalist appeal.

24. The Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists continue to maintain close relations. It is estimated that there are less than a thousand Chinese Communist advisers and technicians with the Viet Minh in Indochina. The Chinese Communists are providing the Viet Minh with military supplies at an estimated average level of 400 to 500 tons per month, and some Viet Minh troops are sent to Communist China for training. Small Chinese Communist units reportedly have entered the mountainous northwest section of Tonkin on several occasions to assist

the Viet Minh against French-supported native guerrillas, but no Chinese Communist troops have been identified in forward areas. There was some evidence during the past year that Viet Minh policy statements may be "cleared," if not written, in Peiping. Close Viet Minh relations with Communist China are complemented, superficially at least, by equally warm relations with the Soviet Union, but we are unable to determine whether Peiping or Moscow has ultimate responsibility for Viet Minh policy.

Probable Trends in French Union Capabilities and Courses of Action

25. French plans for dealing with the war in Indochina now revolve around the development of national armies in the Associated States, particularly in Vietnam. In March 1953, the Franco-Vietnamese High Military Council approved a new program calling for an increase in Vietnamese strength during the current year of 40,000 men, organized in 54 "commando" battalions.‡ A further expansion of 57,000 men has been proposed for 1954 and will probably be undertaken if the initial reinforcement is successful and if equipment is made available by the US. With these additional Vietnamese forces, the French hope to undertake widespread clearing operations and subsequently to organize sufficient mobile groups to begin by early 1955 the destruction of the Viet Minh regular forces in Tonkin.

26. Progress has been made in carrying out the troop reinforcement program thus far, and the Vietnamese may have close to 40,000 reinforcements recruited, trained, and available for combat by early 1954. However, the Viet Minh invasion of Laos and the threat of similar operations will probably keep French mobile reserves deployed outside the Tonkin delta in isolated strong points. The addition of 40,000 untested and lightly armed Vietnamese will not offset the absence of these regular French forces, and effective clearing or offensive operations cannot be undertaken until French Union forces are regrouped. Moreover, the French military leadership has been so dominated by concepts of static defense as to be unable to conduct the planned operations with the vigor necessary for their success. How the new military leadership may alter this we cannot estimate. Finally, unless the French Union forces prove strong enough to provide security for the Vietnamese population, it will not be possible to sweep the guerrillas out of the areas as planned. Not only will the populace fail generally to provide the intelligence required to rout the guerrillas but, as in the past, they will frequently give warning of the presence of the French Union forces, thus permitting the guerrillas to take cover and later to emerge when the danger is past.

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‡The 40,000 are to be recruited and will represent a net increase in French Union strength. Planned transfers of native units from the French Army to the Vietnamese Army will also strengthen the Vietnamese Army but will not represent any net increase in French Union strength. [Footnote in the source text.]

27. The French are fearful that they cannot achieve a military decision in Indochina. Unless the French Union military plans achieve great success during the period of this estimate, the conviction will grow in France that the Indochina problem can only be solved through some over-all East-West settlement in the Far East. The difficulties of the French financial position impel the French to seek relief from the mounting costs of the Indochina war, and French apprehensions concerning eventual German rearmament not only make them reluctant to increase the military establishment in Indochina but impel them to seek the early return of French troops to Europe. The French Government will therefore remain under strong and increasing domestic pressure to reduce its military commitment in Indochina. On the other hand, the French Government is under strong pressure to maintain its position in Indochina. There is still considerable sentiment against abandoning the heavy investment which France has poured into Indochina. More important, there is great reluctance to accept the adverse effects on the cohesion of the French Union and on French prestige as a world power which would accompany the loss of France's position in Indochina. In these circumstances, we believe that the French will continue without enthusiasm to maintain their present levels of troop strength through mid-1954 and will support the planned development of the National Armies of the Associated States. At the same time, France will probably continue to seek maximum financial and material assistance for the French Union effort while resisting any measures which would impair French pre-eminence among the Associated States, including the making of any commitments concerning the eventual political status of the Associated States.

28. Political strength in Vietnam may grow slightly during 1953 as progress is made toward a stronger national army, as the Vietnamese assume increasing governmental responsibilities, and as Premier Tam's social and political programs serve to decrease distrust of French intentions. There will probably also be a growing understanding, and fear, of the true Communist nature and purpose of the Viet Minh. However, these developments will not bring about a significant increase in Vietnamese will and ability to resist the Viet Minh during the period of this estimate because the Vietnam leadership cannot in this brief period overcome popular apathy and mobilize the energy and resources of the people. Moreover, if events should persuade Vietnam leaders that no progress toward national independence is possible under the French or that French Union forces cannot defeat the Viet Minh, it is probable that the political strength of Vietnam would decline rapidly. Substantial Viet Minh military victories in the Tonkin delta or elsewhere in Indochina would also produce such a decline.

29. In Cambodia, political stability is likely to decline as the result of tension between the monarchy, the politically divided people, and the French colonial administration. Even if French concessions to the King insure his adherence to the French Union, unrest in Cambodia or a Viet Minh penetration into southern Laos might force the deployment of strong French forces to Cambodia.

30. In Laos, political attitudes will be determined almost entirely by military developments. The Laotians will probably remain loyal to the French Union if they are defended aggressively. They will not, however, offer effective resistance to Communist efforts to consolidate political control if French Union forces retreat from the country or if the French Union forces defend only a few strong points.

Probable Trends in Viet Minh and Chinese Communist Capabilities and Courses of Action

31. *Viet Minh Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action.* Barring serious Viet Minh military reverses, which could occur if Viet Minh forces should overextend themselves or make frontal attacks on French Union strong points, the Viet Minh regime will probably increase its total strength slightly during the period of this estimate. Viet Minh prestige will be increased by their recent gains in Laos. The organizational and administrative effectiveness of the regime will probably continue to increase with experience and Chinese Communist guidance. The program of expropriation and distribution of lands to tenants now being carried out probably weakens the Viet Minh appeal among some classes, but will probably strengthen Viet Minh controls at the village level and thus facilitate the collection of rice.

32. Militarily, the Viet Minh are unlikely to expand greatly their armed forces because they are already experiencing manpower difficulties. Their combat efficiency probably will increase, however, as the result of a modest augmentation of their unit firepower and a steady improvement in staff planning and coordination of forces. The Viet Minh probably will continue to receive a steady flow of material assistance from the Chinese Communists, and the amount may increase at any time. The Viet Minh do not have, and probably cannot develop within the period of this estimate, the capability to make such effective use of heavy equipment—artillery, armor, and aircraft—from the Chinese Communists as to permit successful attacks against strong concentrations of regular French forces. Over a longer period, however, a great increase in Viet Minh capabilities, including the development of an air force, is possible.

33. We believe that during the period of this estimate the Communists in Indochina will probably attempt to avoid combat except where

they can achieve surprise or great superiority in numbers. They will attempt to consolidate Communist controls in "Free Laos" and will build up supplies in northern Laos to support further penetrations and consolidation in that country. If they reach the Thai border, they probably will attempt to organize guerrilla forces among the Vietnamese in northeastern Thailand, but we do not believe they will have the capability to provide much material assistance to such forces through mid-1954. The Viet Minh forces in Laos may hope to receive assistance from the Vietnamese population in Thailand. The Viet Minh will almost certainly intensify political warfare, including guerrilla activities in Cambodia.

34. We believe that neither the French Union nor the Viet Minh will be able to win a final military decision in Indochina through mid-1954. The Viet Minh, with their principal striking forces operating from the Tonkin base area, will probably retain the initiative during the period of this estimate by maintaining attacks against lightly defended French Union territory. The French Union can hold key positions in Laos and may attempt by attacks against Viet Minh lines of communication, to prevent the Viet Minh from moving southward in force towards southern Laos and Cambodia. We believe, however, that Viet Minh guerrillas in southern Laos will develop sufficient strength to control much of the countryside and that guerrilla activities in Cambodia will be intensified. The French Union probably will reduce, but not eliminate, Viet Minh strength in south Vietnam. Viet Minh infiltration of the Tonkin delta will probably be maintained at a high level and the Viet Minh may undertake major attacks against the delta if they can weaken French defenses by drawing French strength elsewhere.

35. Unless there is a marked improvement in the French Union military position in Indochina, political stability in the Associated States and popular support of the French Union effort against the Viet Minh will decline. We believe that such marked improvement in the military situation is not likely, though a moderate improvement is possible. The over-all French Union position in Indochina therefore will probably deteriorate during the period of this estimate.

36. *Chinese Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action.* The Chinese Communists will have the capability during the period of this estimate to improve airfields in south China, to train Viet Minh pilots, to continue improvement of transportation facilities, and to increase their present level of logistic support for the Viet Minh. The Chinese Communists will probably retain their present capability to commit and support logistically 150,000 Chinese Communist troops for an invasion of Indochina. The combat efficiency of this potential

invasion force could probably be increased considerably by the use of combat-seasoned troops who have been rotated from Korea in the past year. The ability of Chinese Communist forces to sustain offensive operations in Indochina would probably be increased should logistic requirements in Korea remain at low levels for a prolonged period.

37. A Chinese Communist force of 150,000, added to Viet Minh forces, would probably be able to overrun the Tonkin delta area before effective assistance could be brought to bear. The Chinese Communists now have, and will probably continue to have during the period of this estimate, sufficient jet and piston aircraft, independent of operations in Korea, for small-scale but damaging attacks against French Union installations in Tonkin. With surprise, they probably could neutralize the French Air Forces in Tonkin. The Chinese Communist air forces do not appear, however, to possess the capability at present of conducting sustained air operations in Indochina because of a lack of improved airfields in south China and stockpiles of supplies. Such preparations would take several months.

38. We believe that whether or not hostilities are concluded in Korea, the Chinese Communists will not invade Indochina during the period of this estimate.§ Although they possess the capability, the following considerations militate against intervention by regular Chinese Communist forces or by large numbers of Chinese Communist "volunteers":

a. The Communists probably consider that their present strategy in Indochina promises success in a prolonged struggle and produces certain immediate advantages. It diverts badly needed French and US resources from Europe at relatively small cost to the Communists. It provides opportunities to advance international Communist interests while preserving the fiction of "autonomous" national liberation movements, and it provides an instrument, the Viet Minh, with which Communist China and the USSR can indirectly exert military and psychological pressures on the peoples and governments of Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

b. Communist leadership is aware that the West, and in particular the US, would probably retaliate against Communist China if Chinese Communist forces should invade Indochina. We believe that fear of such retaliation and of the major war which might result are important deterrents to open Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina.

39. We believe that the Communist objective to secure control of all Indochina will not be altered by an armistice in Korea or by Communist "peace" tactics. However, the Communists may decide that "peace" maneuvers in Indochina would contribute to the attainment of Communist global objectives, and to the objective of the Viet Minh.

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§The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that the intelligence available is insufficient to permit a conclusion at this time that the Chinese Communists will or will not invade Indochina prior to mid-1954. [Footnote in the source text.]

751G.00/5-2953 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, June 5, 1953—7:45 p. m.

5892. Urtel 6184,[2] rptd Saigon 281, London unnumbered. Concur with Embassies Paris and Saigon Indochina situation approaching critical point where important decisions by French seem called for and where US, because of large share of burden, increasingly entitled have its views heard and given effect. On other hand, Department convinced, as indicated by Embassy Paris, would be distinctly inadvisable for US Govt submit to French Government long list particulars covering points where we feel French action heretofore been nonexistent or insufficient or in wrong direction. Department has firmly resisted temptation to proceed in this manner. Our influence and pressure must be exerted so that French themselves will come up with and implement needed decisions in military, political and economic fields.

We should also help dispel any French illusion as to possibility a solution in Indochina may effortlessly and painlessly flow from some "general settlement in Far East". Especially view current French military posture such eventuality too remote serve as basis for planning, yet believe this illusion has consciously or unconsciously blunted French military and political aggressiveness Indochina. Also hope we could influence top French political leadership retain firm grasp of fact French voluntary withdrawal from Indochina under present conditions inconceivable, aside from practical considerations, because would be (a) dishonorable abandonment those who have engaged lives and security on faith French promises (with US support) and (b) start inevitable chain reaction which would destroy France's position as world power.

Agree with Embassy Paris regarding desirability early high level discussion with French regarding general aspects Indochina situation. See this connection final sentence Deptel 5655 rptd Saigon 2271.[3] Believe forthcoming military mission to Indochina should define military situation and possibilities and should therefore raise certain politico-military issues which could be discussed in course proposed political talks. Amount US aid taken in conjunction with stationary political situation and deteriorating military situation make imperative early joint examination ways reversing current trends.

Believe Embassy's views regarding preparations for proposed conversations sound. Believe political talks should not only follow formation new French Govt and disposition National Assembly debate on

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 2384 and to London by pouch.

[2] Dated May 29, p. 584.

[3] Dated May 18, p. 570.

Indochina but also that they cannot usefully take place until after report proposed military mission has been received US Govt.

DULLES

711.5851G/6–653: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, June 6, 1953—6 p. m.

2387. Repeated information Paris 438. I called on General Navarre today. Re Department's telegram 5827 sent Paris repeated Saigon 2357,[1] he covered much of same ground described in General Trapnell's personal TS message to Collins[2] re forthcoming visit of American military mission to arrive not before June 20 but did not suggest mission limit its stay to between 10 and 14 days. Navarre said he hoped by twentieth to have his feet sufficiently on ground to be useful to military mission but added that after his departure for Paris on July 2 or 3 his deputies could take over if necessary.

General said several times he would be grateful for earliest indication of who chief of forthcoming military mission will be.

Navarre stressed repeatedly his hope that US General heading mission would not only be top-flight officer but would come with no preconceived ideas and in particular that he and mission would not judge war in Indochina by standard military criteria.

New Commander in Chief said that there is no war currently being fought anywhere comparable in character with conflict here. Only parallels in military history which came to mind were French campaign in Mexico and Peninsular wars of Napoleon. General refrained, however, from drawing historical inferences.

MCCLINTOCK

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[1] Telegram 5827 to Paris, June 2, read as follows: "French Embassy informs us mission acceptable but General Navarre asks that it arrive Indochina not earlier than June 20." (711.5851G/6–253)

[2] Message not identified.

MSA files, FRC Acc. No. 56 A 632, folder 2A233

Memorandum by James P. Hendrick to C. Tyler Wood[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] June 10, 1953.

Confirming our talks on Indochina, there are many problems which I have discussed and am discussing with Sam Hayes dealing with the economic aid program there, and two problems of a more general nature which are being considered at a higher level. For what they are worth, here are my comments on the latter.

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[1] Wood was Deputy Director for Congressional Cooperation, Mutual Security Agency. Hendrick, Special Assistant to Wood, was formerly MSA Special Representative at Hanoi. On June 19, this memorandum was transmitted to Harold E. Stassen, Director for Mutual Security; John H. Ohly, Deputy to the Director for Program and Coordination; Brig. Gen. Frank N. Roberts, Senior Military Adviser in the Office of the Director; and Samuel P. Hayes, Jr., Assistant Director for the Far East.

Military Situation.

It was obvious even to the superficial observer that the military situation during the four months I was in Hanoi deteriorated considerably. The views of the principal figures in Hanoi, notably General de Linares, General Cogny (de Linares' successor in charge of North Vietnam operations) and Governor Tri, may be summarized as follows: This is a war in which there are no frontiers. (In this respect it is probably the pattern for future wars.) The enemy is in front, behind, all around. Although the union forces are equal numerically to the Viet Minh, the former must use 65% of their strength to guard supply lines, whereas the Viet Minh, living off the ground and villages they occupy, have no such problem. This means in effect the union forces have only 35% of their troops for offensive operations. They must recruit more men. The only available source for these men is Vietnam. It will take some time to train a Vietnamese army. With union forces presently extended due to the Laotian operation, the Viet Minh are in control of large portions of the delta, and a substantial amount of the five-month rice crop, now being harvested, may fall into their hands. In addition, there is danger of other losses. The twenty-five villages surrounding Dong Quan were placed substantially under Viet Minh control in the last two or three weeks before I left, and the year's first serious instance of sabotage to the vital Hanoi–Haiphong railroad occurred the latter part of May. The balance of the year is going to be very ticklish. Next year, if the Vietnamese army gets going, success can be partially gained, and in 1955 assured.

The night before I left, I had a long talk with General Trapnell. He expressed his complete dissatisfaction with the way things were going. General Trapnell felt his hands were tied under existing instructions whereby he turns over enormous amounts of American matériel, sees it misused or not used at all, and he can do little or nothing about it.

There is an obvious method of attack on this problem, and fortunately this method is now being adopted.

A military mission is going to Indochina, starting the beginning of next week, headed by General O'Daniel.[2] The real purpose of this mission, as I understood it from a talk with the General this morning, is to determine to what extent the United States as a major contributor to the defense effort should have some say as to how this effort is to be directed. General O'Daniel gave every indication of being a hard hitting military man who can come back with some very interesting views on this delicate problem.

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[2] The military mission, headed by Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, USA, arrived in Saigon on June 20. Regarding the mission, see telegram 2552, June 24, p. 616.

Political Situation.

In my capacity as STEM Special Representative I had no more responsibility in the political than in the military field. Nonetheless, I could not help seeing the results of a bad political situation, nor could I keep Vietnamese from coming to me on their own, and telling me things which they claimed they would not tell anyone else.

No one could ask for an abler administrator than Governor Tri in North Vietnam, and on the whole I believe he is popular with the people. The French are not. The simple fact of the matter is that the Vietnamese of the North—and it is in the North that the fighting takes place—want freedom, but if they cannot have it they are by nature more inclined to place themselves under a Chinese yoke than a French yoke.

The man in the rice paddy probably has no concept whatsoever of freedom. He is interested only in security—beyond that his thinking is done for him by village elders.

The village elders are interested in having a minimum of interference. Outside of that they have little interest in how the country is run or by whom.

The businessman is conscious of the restraints placed on him by French exchange controls and by French ownership of all big business. He realizes that he would be no better off—probably worse off—under Chinese domination.

It can be said that the people who are vitally concerned in the matter of freedom and know that they are vitally concerned, are government officials and that small minority which consists of educated people not in the government.

French red tape is notorious. Governor Tri complained to me the last day I saw him that every day he had to send over large numbers of dossiers to the French Comissariat; every day a certain number of his recommendations would be turned down; every day he would have to argue the more important of these cases. He had always succeeded in persuading the French to change their minds when he put the pressure on, because he found the French fundamentally reasonable, but this was a wearing procedure for a man handling the administration of a war area. Those lower down the line do not always find the going so easy. But essentially, their complaint is that they do not trust the French. To some extent this is the expression of an inferiority complex: the French have never trusted the Vietnamese—they have not encouraged their education except in the liberal arts, they do not think they can accomplish anything positive or can be relied on.

Insofar as the non-government intellectuals are concerned, they see the country run by a French-appointed sovereign who in their opinion must accept the dictates of the French. When Bao Dai offered his private plane to help out in connection with the Laotian invasion, the intellectuals construed that not as a generous gesture but as a French maneuver designed to prevent his leaving the country and duplicate the successful appeal of the King of Cambodia to the outside world. They see French Commissioner Gautier installed in the most important building in Saigon, and they feel this building—this symbol of power—should be taken over by the Vietnamese. They hear rumors—in this case reasonably accurate—of situations such as this: the only large coal mine in the country, entirely French owned, grosses 300 million piastres a year, nets 150 million, and the Vietnamese get in taxes 1 million piastres a year. They have studied Vietnamese history and have concluded that their country can only be happy when independent. Despite their hatred of communism, they are not sure that the yellow, Moscow-trained Ho Chi Minh is not more to be trusted than the white, colonial-minded Gautier.

It was not until the devaluation episode, with the failure to consult the Associated States in advance, that Vietnam President Tam, a French citizen generally sympathetic with the French but an astute politician, found the time ripe for a *démarche* towards independence. He has now indicated that he wants to negotiate a new agreement with the French. His demands should be carefully studied.

The Department of State has from time to time held the view that since the French pay most of the cost of the war, France can scarcely be blamed for wanting to keep the Associated States entirely within the French union. The Department has also been sympathetic with the view that Indochinese independence would cause troubles in North Africa. Its position on these points is being currently reexamined.

On the basis of my observations in North Vietnam, I would say this:

We are losing the war.
It is costing us as well as the French a lot of money.
Loss of Indochina to the Communists would be serious indeed.

The war cannot be won unless the people develop more of a will to fight than they now have.

The will to fight cannot be developed until some tangible evidence is given that the French are going to grant some specified measure of increased freedom within some specified period of time.

The Indochinese do not trust the French. They do trust the United States. Hence any agreement or statement which can in any way be approved by us will have infinitely greater force than an agreement made with the French alone. This is something which might be borne in mind in connection with the Bermuda conference.[3]

J[AMES] P. H[ENDRICK]

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[3] A Conference of the Heads of Government of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France (originally scheduled to be held at Bermuda in late May), was postponed first by the French governmental crisis and subsequently by the illness of British Prime Minister Churchill. The meeting ultimately occurred in December 1953.

JCS Records, CCS .092 Asia (6-25-48), sec. 42

Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] 11 June 1953.

Subject: Temporary Loan of an Aircraft Carrier to France

1. With reference to your memorandum, dated 9 June 1953,[1] subject as above, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the French request for the temporary loan of an aircraft carrier of the Lafayette type.

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that this loan is militarily sound for the following reasons:

a. The military situation in Indochina is, and it appears likely will remain, most difficult. Carrier air operations have proved valuable in the conduct of the campaign to date.

b. The French must conduct continuous training to maintain proficiency of carrier flight personnel and to provide replacements. Concurrently, the carriers themselves must receive periodic refit and overhaul. The continuous commitment of one of the two currently available CVL to combat operations in Indochina, therefore, imposes a difficult burden on the French. The loan of a third CVL would enable maintenance, training and combat operations to proceed simultaneously.

c. The French can man and operate the third CVL without detriment to their current North Atlantic Treaty Organization naval commitments. Required aircraft and personnel are available in France to utilize this vessel effectively.

d. A light carrier of the same type as the Lafayette is currently in U.S. mobilization reserve status. Provision of a ship of identical type will simplify problems of logistic support, and provide maximum flexibility in personnel and equipment.

3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore recommend that:

a. The proposed loan of a CVL to France for use in Indochina be approved.

b. This vessel be authorized for inclusion in the FY '54 Mutual Defense Assistance Program for France.

c. At such time and under such terms as Congress approves the loan, the Secretary of State be requested to negotiate a change in the bilateral agreement with the French Government to permit the utilization of this vessel in Indochinese waters.

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[1] Not printed.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
F. F. Everest
Lieut. General, USAF
Director, Joint Staff

751H.11/6–1553: Telegram

The Chargé at Phnom Penh (Montllor) to the Department of State

SECRET PHNOM PENH, June 15, 1953—midnight.

74. Sent Paris 41, Bangkok unnumbered, Tokyo unnumbered, Saigon 241. In dramatic and unexpected move King yesterday went into self-imposed exile in Thailand while touring Siem Reap. In strong statement he accused French of not wanting to grant Cambodian independence but said die is cast and he will not return Cambodia until French agree full and complete independence.[1] Negotiations which had taken place with French now voided and Cambodia will not settle for less than demands King made in memo to Auriol last March.[2]

In view sudden nature of move it seems likely that King inspired to action by Dap Chhoun[3] or Son Ngoc Thanh. Country perfectly normal. Will continue reporting.

MONTLLOR

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[1] For text of the statement, June 14, see Denise Folliot, ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1953*, Royal Institute of International Affairs (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 470. For the texts of several statements issued by King Norodom Sihanouk between June 12 and June 28, see Cambodia, *Livre Jaune*, I, pp. 113–130. For the text of the statement issued by Jean Letourneau, French Minister for the Associated States, on June 14, regarding the flight of the King, see *L'Année Politique, 1953*, p. 578. In telegram 6459 from Paris, June 15, Ambassador Dillon reported that according to an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Government was at a complete loss to explain the King's action, especially in light of recent progress in French-Cambodian negotiations. (751H.00/6–1553)

[2] Regarding the King's letters to President Auriol of France, see footnote 4, p. 476.

[3] Adviser to King Norodom Sihanouk; former dissident nationalist.

751H.00/6–1653: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, June 16, 1953—9 p. m.

6493. Department pass USUN; repeated information Saigon 297, Bangkok 13, New York 65. After completing discussion subject mentioned Embtel 6492,[1] Bidault said that he wanted to take up another matter—the question of possible Siamese appeal to the UN in the light of the present situation.

He reinforced everything Maurice Schumann had told me last night, as related in Embtel 6473,[2] and said that he wanted to state personally how serious he felt the situation was. Any appeal to the UN by Siam would now, in his opinion, be inextricably tied in with the situation in Cambodia, and so the sole defendant before the UN would be France. In view of France's present burden in carrying on the war in Indochina and in trying to handle the situation in Cambodia, the addition of a UN problem would make France's position insupportable. He felt that any such action would greatly strengthen those forces in the French Parliament who were desirous of giving up in Indochina and accepting a settlement with the Viet Minh. He said that he regarded this question now as the crucial test of United States willingness to support the French position in Indochina.

DILLON

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[1] In telegram 6492 from Paris, June 16, not printed, Ambassador Dillon reported a discussion with Foreign Minister Bidault on the Rosenberg case. (761.5211 Rosenberg/6–1653)

[2] Telegram 6473 from Paris, June 16, read in part as follows:

"Schumann said that he, Bidault, and permanent staff at Foreign Office considered this to be most serious and critical situation, and that Bidault wished me to communicate his views on this subject promptly to the Secretary. They feel that it fully justifies their opposition to any Siamese move whatever before the UN at this time. Such a move now would inevitably mean that Cambodian situation and whole political system in Indochina would be questioned and debated at UN. Thus, their former opposition to any move by Siam before the UN is confirmed and strengthened to the point of bitterness.

"Schumann said that it would be most difficult now as result of Cambodian developments for French not to consider as an unfriendly act continued approval, even though only tacit, by US of any Siamese appeal to UN. This obviously includes Laotian case.

"*Comment:* It is difficult to overemphasize present concern and bitterness of French on this subject." (751H.00/6–1653)

751G.00/6–1753: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, June 17, 1953—7 p. m.

6512. Repeated Saigon 298. Labouisse and I had lunch today with Mendes-France. He talked freely about his policies and gave us a complete outline of his thoughts on Indochina. He feels that the present situation cannot continue and drastic action should only be taken with the concurrence of and after full discussion with the Western powers having interests in the area, including the United States and Great Britain.

The policy which he would propose would be to guarantee immediate and full independence to the Indochinese states. As an earnest of this decision, he would replace 200 to 300 leading colonial administrators with men from France having no previous experience in Indochina and who were pledged to carry out the new policy of full independence. Independence would also carry with it the offer of full authority in all districts where active fighting was not taking place and the immediate abolition of the maximum number of controls possible. Finally, the grant of independence would contain a definite time schedule for the withdrawal of French forces from Indochina. This schedule will be realistically arrived at based on the speed with which these forces can be replaced by Associated States troops.

As an example, Mendes-France used the following figures: Withdrawing 15,000 French troops at end of six months; increasing total to 30,000 at end of first year and 60,000 at end of second year, and probably completing withdrawal in three years. Shortly after this grant of independence had been made, the newly independent states and France would together propose an armistice to Ho Chi-minh, subject to free nation-wide elections for a constituent assembly to establish a constitution for free and independent Vietnam. Mendes-France said that he had made many inquiries as to the results of an election if it were held under such circumstances, and his opinion was that the resulting Parliament would be divided between numerous parties, religious, social, etc. The Communist Party would, in all probability, be the largest, having approximately 25 to 30 percent of the Parliament. He thought that this was an acceptable risk. If Ho Chi-minh should refuse an armistice on these terms, he felt the moral strengthening of the Vietnam cause would be so great that early victory might be possible.

He further stated that it was obviously the Communist policy to continue the war in Indochina for the purpose of weakening France and the Western alliance. While the Soviet peace offensive had been followed up by peaceful moves in practically every part of the world, there had been no sign of any such moves in Indochina. Obviously, this area is not included in the peace offensive. Conversely the Chinese and Soviets have taken care to give Ho Chi-minh only enough arms to continue to sap the French strength and not enough to achieve a complete victory, which he felt would have been within the Communist capabilities if the USSR and China had desired to make the effort. He feels that Indochina can now be considered a Chinese sphere of influence from which the Soviets have withdrawn. He also feels that during Chou En-lai's[1] recent visit to Moscow, after which it was announced that the Soviets were staying in Manchuria, the Chinese received as a *quid pro quo* a free hand in South and Southeast Asia.

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[1] **Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China.**

At the conclusion of our talk, he again stressed that the only alternative to a policy, such as he outlined, would be a political catastrophe in Indochina within the next year.[2]

DILLON

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[2] In telegram 2544 from Saigon, repeated for information to Paris as telegram 471, June 23, Ambassador Heath stated the following: "Is it possible that Mendès-France really believes that his proposals can do other than deliver Indochina to Communists in shortest possible time? Elections after an armistice would most certainly result in a popular-front type of government which would be merely precursor to a Communist state à la Czechoslovakia." (751G.00/6–2353)

751G.00/6–1853 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, June 18, 1953—6 p. m.

836. Repeated information Saigon 658, Paris 390. Governor Tri said today that he and various of his close political associates have during recent weeks become increasingly disturbed by indications that French might under certain circumstances be led to undertake negotiations with the Viet-Minh in an attempt to end the war here and pave the way for their own departure. Long-standing fear that French might make such attempt has been heightened by armistice negotiations in Korea which appear be approaching successful conclusion, by fact Mendes-France was narrowly defeated in bid for French Premiership, and most recently by visit to Peking of French business group, widely reported locally to include Sainteny, traditional French contact man with Viet-Minh. Tri said he brought subject up in order inquire what probable US reaction would be if French do in fact attempt reach agreement with Viet-Minh; he feels that US moral position, if it intends resist any move by French in this direction, may have been compromised by its apparent willingness admit UN agreement with Chinese Communists which perpetuates a divided Korea and the presence of foreign troops on Korean soil.

I attempted assure Tri that situation here is not analogous to that in Korea saying: UN goal in Korea had been to resist aggression and that UN would require guarantees against renewal of aggression; no territorial division similar to that which has existed *de facto* in Korea since 1945 is possible here; strategic interest of US in Indochina extends to all Southeast Asia; US could not contemplate any arrangement by French which would lay this vital area open to Communist domination by conquest or otherwise.

Tri remained sceptical that US could exert enough pressure to force French remain here, assuming certain political combinations in France, but hopeful that it would attempt to do so. Problem he and his political friends now face, he said, is posture to assume it if should be established that French intend undertake negotiations with Viet-Minh. They are determined resist such negotiations at all costs but are undecided how best make their position unequivocal.

STURM

751H.00/6-1953 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, June 19, 1953—7:49 p. m.

6093. Limit distribution. Following is memorandum conversation between Secretary and Bonnet June 16: [2]

"Bonnet said he was instructed by his Government to request us to urge that the Thailand Government should not support any application to UN on behalf of Cambodia at instigation of King of Cambodia who had taken asylum in Thailand.

"I said that our influence with Thailand had at French request been exerted in favor of Thailand not making UN application on its own behalf and that I was reluctant now to press them again. However I said it might be feasible for us to urge them not to act on behalf of Cambodia if at same time we lifted embargo we had attempted to impose upon their application on their own behalf. The Ambassador said he had read proposed Thailand statement to UN and that it involved many matters of concern to France. I said perhaps we might get them to change the formal statement so as to leave out matters relating to French Indochina. The Ambassador said this would still be bad but not as bad as the application on behalf of Cambodia."

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Robert H. McBride, Officer in Charge of French-Iberian Affairs. Also transmitted to Bangkok as telegram 2469.

[2] The copy of the memorandum of conversation initialed by Secretary Dulles is in file 751H.00/6-1653.

751G.00/6-2053 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, June 20, 1953—noon.

840. Sent Department 840, Saigon 660, Paris 391. Two groups of six Viet-Minh each penetrated Shell Oil Company tank dump at Haiphong about one o'clock morning nineteenth and with hand grenades blew up four of the tanks; destroyed containers held 3.6 million liters of petroleum products in 4,000 cubic meters of storage space.

Shell installation is largest of its type in North Vietnam and vital both to military and to civilian economy. Viet-Minh withdrew after attack, apparently without losses. General Cogny, who made special visit to scene yesterday, told me that principal immediate problem created by episode is shortage of grease, nearly entire north Vietnamese stock of which was destroyed by explosions and subsequent fires. Emergency shipments of grease from Saigon will be required. Some lube oil also lost.

Governor Tri said last night he was unable understand how this essential installation could have been so imperfectly guarded, especially since his own security officers on May 20 warned military that exactly such an attack on Shell dump was in preparation.

Merlo [1] commented that High Commissioner Gautier, now in north on official visit, was "furious" over the episode.

This commando raid is clearly one of series inaugurated by attack on Kienan munitions depot and continued by successful coup against military training center at Nam-Dinh. It appears as partial Viet-Minh answer to Cogny's policy of freeing military units from guard duty for offensive operations.

STURM

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[1] Guy Merlo, Delegate General of the French High Commissariat in North Vietnam.

751H.00/6–2253 : Telegram

The Chargé at Phnom Penh (Montllor) to the Department of State

SECRET PHNOM PENH, June 22, 1953.

84. Sent Saigon 256, repeated information Department 84, Paris 48. I called on High Commissioner Risterucci this afternoon and he is confident that differences with Cambodia can all be arranged once France has a new government. Risterucci's fear is that King has excited people to such an extent that it may be difficult to keep control until a French government can act. High Commissioner said that he prepared to go to Paris with Cambodian Prime Minister and argue before new government need to grant Cambodia her independence. He requested that when at all possible I impress Cambodians with need to keep calm and with French intention to meet their demands by peaceful means.

Comment: This is first time I have heard Risterucci be so generous towards Cambodian demands. The King's emotional doings are therefore producing results. Let us hope the King does not become intoxicated by his success and resort to more drastic appeals.

MONTLLOR

JCS Records, CCS .092 Asia (6-25-48), sec. 43

Report by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET
JCS 1992/227

WASHINGTON, 22 June 1953.

POSSIBLE MILITARY COURSES OF ACTION IN INDOCHINA

. . . .

CONCLUSIONS

5. Without overt Chinese Communist intervention the Communist forces in Indochina do not have the capability now of forcing the French by military action alone to withdraw from Indochina.

6. Possible military courses of action which may be taken in conjunction with the French and other Allies to counter Chinese Communist aggression are discussed in Enclosure "A" to J.C.S. 1992/146[2] and are valid under the circumstances cited therein.

7. If the French are forced by military action to withdraw from Indochina as a result of Chinese Communist aggression there is no feasible military course of action which can be taken by the United States in Indochina to prevent Communist forces from overrunning that country.

8. In the event the French are forced to withdraw as a result of a political decision, the United States might undertake the following courses of action:

a. Course A—Support and intensify the development of native forces and deploy U.S. and Allied forces to the area to undertake operations with the objective of reducing Communist activity to the status of scattered guerrilla bands.

b. Course B—Support and intensify the development of native forces, deploy sufficient ground forces to hold critical strong points vacated by the French and provide air and naval support for such operations as may be undertaken until such time as indigenous forces can undertake the objective in a. above.

9. If current French plans for the expansion of native forces have reached an advanced stage of completion the United States might undertake the following possible courses of action:

a. Course C—Support and intensify the development of native forces and provide air and naval support for such operations as can be conducted by indigenous ground forces.

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[1] The conclusions of this report, printed here, were noted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on July 2, 1953. This text reflects amendments made by the JCS at that time.

[2] Not printed.

b. Course D—Support and intensify the development of native forces by supervising training and providing the necessary logistic support for such operations as can be conducted by the indigenous forces.

10. Any augmentation of forces or increases in supplies and equipment to implement any one or a combination of the foregoing military courses of action in Indochina would result in diversion of like amounts from Republic of Korea (ROK) augmentation and support, and/or from approved North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces. Substantial increases in supplies and equipment for military aid to Southeast Asia would require immediate expansion of U.S. military production with corresponding fiscal support and a delay in implementation equivalent to production lead time if diversion from other programs is to be avoided.

11. The United States might undertake the following implementing political actions prior to or in conjunction with any one or a combination of the foregoing military courses of action:

a. Obtain a commitment from the French to effect an orderly transfer of responsibilities in Indochina by extending the period of withdrawal as long as practicable.

b. Seek to obtain U.N. action in Indochina similar to that taken with regard to Korea, with the provision that the United States be designated as executive agent.

c. Because of their immediate interest in the area, obtain significant force contributions from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France and the National Government of the Republic of China (NGRC).

d. Call for the immediate formation of an Asiatic League which would include the NGRC and would provide forces to combat Communism in the Far East.

RECOMMENDATION

12. That the Joint Chiefs of Staff note the conclusions in paragraphs 5 through 11 above.

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711.5851G/6–2453 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, June 24, 1953—11 a. m.

2552. Repeated information Paris 474. No distribution outside Department. For Johnson (FE) from Bonsal. O'Daniel mission[1] arrived twentieth and has been engaged series intensive briefings and discussions with French and Vietnamese military. Group departs for Hanoi today returning about twenty-seventh.

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[1] The O'Daniel Mission was announced in Department of State Press Release No. 329 of June 20, 1953, which read as follows: "In response to an invitation

Cordial working relationships have been established. O'Daniel has injected a number of fresh ideas and suggestions in discussions particularly with Navarre, Bodet (his deputy) and Bondis (head of forces in south Vietnam) in stimulating, forthright fashion and apparently without giving offense. Specific reactions as yet undetermined although reasonable suppose at least some of these concepts have fallen on fruitful soil.

Navarre himself gives me impression being offensive-minded. His broad strategic thinking resembles Letourneau–Allard outline with time-table somewhat improved. He contemplates strategic offensive in Tonkin area for September next year preceded by maximum of offensive activity of tactical nature in that area prior to date indicated. He is aware danger heavy enemy offensive capability beginning September this year but hopes throw enemy off balance through limited offensive action.

Navarre proceeding Paris early July to present plans to government. I believe those plans will be favorably influenced by vigorous O'Daniel approach. I believe also that they may include request for additional French Union forces, perhaps in amount equivalent to two divisions.

My impression is that unless French and Vietnamese can concentrate in Tonkin this fall sufficient mobile forces seriously to hurt the

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from the French Prime Minister when he visited Washington last March, a U.S. military mission headed by Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, presently commander, U.S. Army Pacific, will arrive at Saigon on June 20. Its purpose will be to pursue discussions with Gen. Henri Navarre, Commander in Chief, Indochina, on the manner in which U.S. material and financial support of the effort of the French and Associated States armed forces in Indochina may best contribute to the advancement of the objectives of defeating the Communist forces there and of bringing peace and security to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. It is believed essential to insure an increasingly close integration of U.S. assistance with the plans developed by the authorities of France and of the Associated States.

"Arrangements are being made for the military leaders of the Associated States to participate in these discussions. The vital role of the national armies of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and the increasingly important assumption of high military responsibilities by the Associated States will make these discussions of particular interest." (Department of State *Bulletin*, June 29, 1953, p. 909)

For the terms of reference of the mission, as prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in collaboration with the Department of State, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 59–67. The mission consisted of 12 military officers, including General O'Daniel. Bonsal, Director of PSA, accompanied the group as political consultant.

For the report of the O'Daniel Mission, July 15, 1953 (without annexes), see *ibid.*, pp. 69–96. A copy of the report, including its annexes, is in file 711.5851G/7-1553.

enemy and to deprive him of the broad capacity for initiative which he has enjoyed over past year, situation may deteriorate irretrievably. Political evolution and developments here and in France, war weariness, continued high prestige of Ho forces, and other factors with which Department abundantly familiar support this impression.

It would be my hope that at Bermuda meeting,[2] President could discuss situation with French Prime Minister and encourage his support of prompt positive approach to military situation and discourage wishful thinking as to possibility of a negotiated settlement free world could live with. (Idea of reinforcements from French Union has been advanced by Admiral Radford and by others who have studied situation here. General Navarre should of course not be brought into picture by us at Bermuda.)

It would seem important at Bermuda:

(1) To combat French illusion that Indochina situation can at this stage honorably be settled by negotiation with Chinese Communists or with Soviets;

(2) To give French such indications as may be possible that, if as result of vigorous military offensive by Franco-Vietnamese against Viet-Minh, Chinese Communists should invade Indochina, we would not abandon them but would indeed support them vigorously on sea and in the air;

(3) To emphasize need for handling political development of Associated States in manner more consistent with political necessities and with professions of faith made by French in past. Useful tripartite statement could perhaps be made along lines earlier suggested.

Ambassador Heath concurs.

HEATH

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[2] See footnote 3, p. 608.

751H.00/6–2453: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, June 24, 1953—3 p. m.

2516. Cambodian Ambassador inquired June 23 about *New York Times* report dateline Saigon June 21 US representative Bangkok supported French position refusing deal with King on foreign territory and US Govt attitude influenced Thai Govt to demur about submitting Cambodian case UN.[2] Informed him story without foundation. Ambassador said King would remain Battambang for present. Thinks negotiations with France can reach satisfactory conclusion after new French Government formed but devaluation piastre and absence authority previous French negotiators require fresh start. Believes would ease political tension Cambodia if new French Government would declare readiness negotiate and designate negotiator with full powers conclude agreement. Prime Minister would then proceed to Paris.

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[1] Drafted by Robert E. Hoey and Henry B. Day of PSA. Repeated for information to Phnom Penh as telegram 6, to Bangkok as 2503, and Paris as 6159.

[2] The article under reference appeared in the *New York Times* of June 22 (p. 3). Day's memorandum of the Day–Hoey conversation with Ambassador Nong Kimny on June 23 is in file 751H.00/6–2353.

Ambassador stressed peoples desire independence and danger some incident provoking them to action endangering prospects peaceful negotiation. Disturbed over unconfirmed report press French sending African troops into Cambodia.

DULLES

751G.00/6-2653 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, June 26, 1953—noon.

2561. Repeated information Paris 478, pouched Hanoi. Bao Dai received me immediately following his arrival in Saigon yesterday afternoon. He informed me a principal purpose of his trip was to present to General Navarre his, Bao Dai's plans for increasing and using the National Army.

The Vietnamese National Army should be increased by further 95 battalions in calendar year 1954, Bao Dai said. With the 54 battalions to be added this year, the army should finally clean the Viet Minh out of Cochin China and the provinces at present partially pacified in central Vietnam and also occupy and completely pacify southwestern part of Tonkin Delta during campaign season beginning next October. The reason for placing Vietnamese troops in southwestern part of Tonkin was emplace them for an offensive against Viet Minh in Thanh-Hoa–Vinh–Ha-Tinh region, which was the main source of food and troops for the Viet Minh. Bao Dai went on to say he did not know exactly when it would be possible to move on Thanh-Hoa–Vinh, but indicated it might be possible towards the end of the next dry season. When this region was occupied and pacified, then National Army could join with French Union forces in final operations to destroy the Viet Minh in north and throughout Vietnam. He stated, however, it would not be possible to envisage the completed destruction of Viet Minh resistance within next year. It would take two or even three years to build up Vietnamese National Army to point where with French they could completely destroy enemy resistance.

In effect, he said, what he was proposing was to transform the war from one in which the main fighting was done by the French Union forces, aided by the Vietnamese National Army, to one where the principal fighting would be done by the National Army, aided by the French Union troops. He thought that Navarre would agree both to his plan to increase the National Army and his conception of military operations. Navarre could not, however, agree to provide the money necessary for the build-up of the National Army. That could be done only by the French Government—when one was formally constituted. Accordingly, Bao Dai accompanied by his chief of staff, General Hinh, would follow General Navarre to Paris next week when the latter would report to the new government his estimate of and plans for the situation. Bao Dai hoped that the French Government would provide necessary funds for increasing the National Army. If it refused, he, Bao Dai, would "find the means somehow".

He admitted that he was a little worried lest a new French Government might endeavor to withdraw from its involvement in Indochina through concluding an armistice with the Viet Minh. If a French Government decided on such course, he of course could not stop it, but he, Bao Dai, would not be a party to an armistice under present condition. It would be impossible to conclude an armistice, given the present relative strength of the Viet Minh, except one tantamount to surrendering to the Viet Minh. The latter must be beaten, and to do so would require national sacrifices on the part of the Vietnamese Government, which he was prepared to order.

I remarked that Letourneau when in Washington had given some tentative, but far from final, figures as to the additional financial outlay involved in building up the Vietnamese National Army. The American Government had expressed willingness to study the possibility of aiding in this increase, but no decision could be given one way or another until we had final figures and estimates. Bao Dai said that should be easy. It cost 800,000 francs a year for equipment for maintenance of a Vietnamese soldier.

I inquired as to Bao Dai's intentions in the forthcoming meeting of the High Council of French Union and asked whether his government would seek changes in the present constitution of the Union. Bao Dai said that he was not particularly interested in any "paper concessions" at this time. All he wanted now from France was help in building up his army to a real fighting force. When that was achieved, the question of the relations of Vietnam with the French Union could be easily decided on the basis of something like equality. He remarked that of course, if France "capitulated" to the Cambodian King's demands, it would automatically have to extend the same concessions to Vietnam and Laos. He spoke in contemptuous terms of the King of Cambodia's action in leaving his country. (Bao Dai has obviously not forgotten the period last year when the Cambodian King's action in taking to field personally against the rebels was contrasted with Bao Dai's apparent inactivity). Bao Dai said that he hitherto recognized the Cambodian Monarchy as the legal government of Cambodia, but when the King left his kingdom, he opened the door to rebellion, whether by the Issaraks, the Viet Minh, or an outright Communist revolution. He said that he could hardly consider Cambodian Government in view of King's flight as a legal government and that he had ordered his chief of staff to make appropriate disposition of his troops to prevent Viet Minh raids or operations against Vietnam from Cambodia. He remarked that the Viet Minh had been free to enter or leave Cambodia at will.

He spoke bitterly of the unexpected action of the French in unilaterally devaluing the piaster, but said that I would note that Vietnam had made no official protest to France. He was not interested in "rowing with" the French or obtaining small concessions, provided France would help him in building up the Vietnamese National Army. He remarked that France had agreed to finance the 54 battalion increase this year, but so far not a cent of money had been forthcoming. The Vietnamese Government could carry on through June but then the promised French contribution must be forthcoming. (Tam told me the same thing yesterday.)

French High Commissioner Gautier today told me of his talk with Bao Dai, which, with the exception of the latter's expression to me of fears lest a new French Government attempt to negotiate an armistice with Viet Minh, was almost a replica of Bao Dai's talk with me. Gautier said Bao Dai assured him that he was not pressing for any concessions, merely for assistance in building up his army. Gautier said this was a tribute to Bao Dai's realism and intelligence. He knew for a fact that Bao Dai had been receiving a flood of letters, some signed, some anonymous, urging him to follow the example of the Cambodian King and strike out for complete independence. Bao Dai was shrewd enough to see that any such action would indispose the French Government and Parliament to continuation or increase of French military and financial sacrifices in Indochina. He was also shrewd enough to see that any popularity as he might gain by an outburst against the French would be ephemeral and unreliable. Gautier said that in any case the existing accords imposed only two real infringements of Vietnamese juridical independence—one being the stipulation that legislation or decrees affecting French interests as defined in the accords would not become binding on French nationals until promulgated by the High Commissioner, and the other the regime of the mixed courts. France was ready to negotiate an acceptable adjustment of these two issues. Indeed, on May 31, he had written to Vietnamese Government offering to abolish the stipulation re necessity of High Commissioner's promulgation of laws and orders affecting French nationals, proposing instead a system of advance consultation with the High Commissariat on measures affecting French interests. As regards the mixed courts, the existing accords had carried the concept of the co-sovereignty of France and Vietnam, which was not compatible with true independence of latter. France was prepared to drop any connection between the French courts and the Vietnamese courts, provided the latter in cases involving French nationals would have French judges on the bench with Vietnamese judges, but these French judges would be officials of and responsible to the Vietnamese Government, not to France.

HEATH

751H.00/6–2753 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, June 27, 1953—1 p. m.

6666. Repeated information Saigon 310, Phnom Penh 9. Deptel 6209 June 26 (Saigon 2535, Phnom Penh 8).[1] Embassy has no way estimating effect on Cambodians of statement by French Government of nature suggested reference telegram but does not believe US intervention at this time to obtain such statement is desirable. We do believe that we would be justified, however, in expressing informally to Foreign Office our serious concern over reports of French reinforcements being sent Cambodia, which instead of serving to calm situation might produce opposite effect, particularly in view inflamed Nationalist sentiments and possibilities Viet Minh or other anti-

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[1] In telegram 6209 to Paris, June 26, not printed, the Department of State requested the views of its representatives in Paris, Saigon, and Phnom Penh as to the value of a statement by the United States to the French Foreign Ministry to the effect that the formation of a new government offered the opportunity for a "forward-looking and soothing" pronouncement on Cambodia. (751H.00/6–2653)

Joseph Laniel, an Independent Republican, was elected Premier of France by the National Assembly on June 26. He formed a government on June 28 which included Paul Reynaud, Henri Queuille, and Pierre-Henri Teitgen as Vice-Premiers; Georges Bidault as Minister of Foreign Affairs; and René Pleven as Minister of National Defense. For Laniel's account of developments in regard to the Indochina situation from the time of the formation of his government through the Geneva Conference of 1954, see Joseph Laniel, *Le drame indochinois, de Dien Bien Phu au pari de Genève* (Paris, Plon, 1957).

French elements might use occasion to stage incident setting off explosion.[3]

In reply our query regarding these reinforcements, Roux told us last night they were solely for purpose protecting large number French residents in event trouble. He says that while no final decision yet taken there is increasing support for course of action by which French Government, prior to Bermuda Conference, would open talks with three Associated States (with Bao Dai, Laotian King and perhaps Cambodian Prime Minister Pen Nouth) at Paris intended to assure them in principle of degree of independence they desired. Details of settlement would then be reserved for discussion at forthcoming meeting of High Council French Union. Impression gained is that this represents not only Foreign Office thinking but also ideas of other official circles.

Cheysson tells us that his efforts have been directed to buttonholing various French political figures, within and out of National Assembly, with view to paving way for arrival Tam with request for revision accords governing Franco-Vietnamese relations. He has had many sympathetic listeners but appears to think that no one here will take initiative in view of French policy toward lines designed to give Associated States maximum freedom within French Union and that, while increasing number French realizes something along these lines is essential, impetus must await Tam's presentation Vietnamese program. Tam would, of course, present Vietnamese demands in frank and friendly fashion and would not follow Cambodian example.

In light of foregoing and intense French preoccupation with IC problem as shown during long governmental crisis, we believe that we should for moment not do anything on US side which would tend to rock boat. There is much bitterness here over actions Cambodian King and IC problem is one of great sensitivity. However, we could easily justify our concern over sending French reinforcements to Cambodia and use that as peg on which to hang expression our interest in future course of action. Roux's reference to possible talks with Associated States prior to Bermuda Conference may reflect French desire to be in position meet US–UK queries or pressure on IC problem, particularly if, as seems clear, "burden-sharing" element of IC problem is to be introduced by them. French must put some kind of best foot forward if they are to be in position to ask for increased support.

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[3] In telegram 6253 to Paris, June 29 (sent to Phnom Penh as telegram 9 and also to Hanoi and Saigon), the Department of State stated the following: "Embassy Paris authorized at discretion informally transmit Foreign Office concern over tense situation Cambodia including troop reinforcements and hope new Government will take early opportunity relieve tension by words and deeds.

"At same time sincerely trust Cambodian Government continue maintain calm and not allow extreme elements create atmosphere in which negotiations would be difficult." (751H.00/6–2753)

In telegram 6707 from Paris, June 30, Ambassador Dillon reported having expressed informally to the Foreign Ministry the concern of the United States over the Cambodian situation. (751H.00/6–3053)

DILLON

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, "July 1953 Talks"

Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Radford)[1]

TOP SECRET SAIGON, June 30, 1953.

8163/8234

CINCPAC pls inform JCS Defense and State. Re msg Assistant SecDef. Upon request Navarre handed me paper containing fol statement verbatim "Principles for the Conduct of the War in Indochina

i To retake the initiative immediately thru the carrying out, beginning this summer, of local offensives and by pushing to the utmost commando and guerrilla actions

ii To take the offensive in the north beginning Sept 15, in order to forestall enemy attack. To conduct the battle which will take place during the fall and winter of 1953–54 in an offensive manner by attacking the flanks and the rears of the enemy

iii To recover from areas not directly involved in the battle a maximum number of units. To pacify these regions progressively

iv To build up progressively a battle corps by grouping battalions into regiments and regiments into divisions and by giving to the units thus created the necessary support (arty engr armor communications) taking into account the very special character of the war in Indochina (the terrain, the enemy). To bring about a max of cooperation with the Air Force and the Navy

v To have a reserve of special type units (armored commandos light battalions etc) designed to adapt the character of the groups and divisions to the nature of the terrain and of the mission assigned

vi To continue the effort of instructing and organizing the army of the Associated States so as to give them a more and more extensive place as well as more and more autonomy in the conduct of operations."

Comment: Navarre has aggressive ideas hidden in calm manner. Our discussions have been frank and above board. I feel that he is honest and trustworthy and will do everything possible to carry out anything that he says he will do. He appears to be somewhat cautious in policy of reducing number of troops in inactive areas. We feel that there are enough troops in Vietnam to organize at least 5 divisions for offensive action. However Navarre disagrees and this, combined with apparent lack of comprehension by French as to methods of how such a force could be organized makes it unlikely that French can implement such a plan, the French reasoning perhaps being both political and military. However Navarre has agreed to organize 3 divisions from troops now in Vietnam for striking in Tonkin Delta area. Navarre plans to ask French for the bulk of 2 more French divisions, strong in engr and signal support, for employment in order to launch decisive offensive this fall. Navarre's idea is to win the war here as soon as possible, and have Vietnam army take over for pacification and future action and to withdraw bulk of French forces to Europe. Navarre wants to develop Associated States to the limit. He visualizes arrangements with Associated States similar to those of US with Philippines with long term agreements with French ra quies [?] and economic status. Navarre says this is personal opinion and does not care to be quoted officially. We heartily urge support.

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[1] Gen. O'Daniel was chief of the U.S. military survey mission which arrived in Indochina on June 20. This message was transmitted to CINCPAC through U.S. Navy channels and relayed to Washington.

My staff discussing details with French staff concerning implementing future plans of operation pointed to fix timing and support. We have been urging mopping up action during the rainy season. Cogny and his new Deputy Commander in Tonkin Delta area are receptive as is Navarre and I believe they will begin action this summer using amphibious vehicles to the maximum. Using terms of reference as guide, our summary follows: The Letourneau-Allard Plan being modified as indicated above to what I term the "Navarre Plan" full utilization of capabilities not being made and lack of standardization in training noticed. This being discussed with French staff. French military plan being developed as indicated. This also being followed through by staff. Have discussed in detail with Navarre possible methods of knocking enemy off balance, disrupting his supply lines and gaining and maintaining the initiative. He is in accord and I feel he will take steps to implement. Plans are under way to expand training facilities. This is being discussed with the French staff and further report will be made at a later date. Gen Navarre is in favor of transfer of leadership responsibilities to Associated States and Bao Dai has decreed the organization or creation of a staff college for development of higher ranking officers. Better and closer cooperation with MAAG assured. We urge setting up French MAAG for training Associated States army to work side by side with US MAAG. This being considered. Laotian and Cambodian armies being included in plan for future. Navarre believes that French should take a well defined position for the future similar to our action re development Philippines. Navarre and others of the French army have stated to me that Navarre has complete military authority and is not hampered by political directives; however, I believe he will feel freer to act after his forthcoming visit to France. His departure date is definitely set for 2 July.

A higher ceiling is needed for the air as well as for Navy. 25 hundred additional being estimate needed for air. French need to train more Vietnam indigenous personnel in the technical and pilot fields of operations. An increase for flying time for expanded operations cannot be supported unless additional supply and maintenance personnel are acquired for the Air Force. This being discussed with French staff. Psychological and unconventional warfare coordination throughout the command is required. We feel the effort must be centrally controlled and supported and are presenting our views to the French. We do not believe it advisable for us to participate in direct advice training or planning for operations of the army of the Associated States although indirectly much can be done, particularly should French agree to set up a training advisory group to operate side by side with US MAAG.

Plans are under way for further development of an indigenous military potential including manpower and leaders. I feel that we should utilize US service schools in US, and have so stated to French, both for French and for Associated States to develop instructors. Navarre likes the idea. I believe build up of Associated States forces will be accelerated beyond the Letourneau–Allard concept. As indicated, Navarre proposes to wrest initiative from Vietminh as soon as possible. We are discussing plans with French re how to administer and protect liberated areas. Navarre has agreed to small combat intelligence team to US Military Attaché, French Indochina with authority to operate in conjunction with French G2 vicinity Hanoi.

Finally we feel that if Navarre is given support on political level he will do much toward bringing war here to successful conclusion. In all cases am endeavoring to obtain concrete, definite answers to problems here through personal talks with Navarre and pursuit to conclusion through staff to staff operations. Feel that our mission here will be fulfilled by 10 July and plan tentatively to depart US via Manila–Honolulu about that date. Heath and Bonsal concur contents this message.

Lt Gen O Daniel

751H.00/7–153 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET NIACT WASHINGTON, July 1, 1953—7 : 07 p. m.

8. AP, UP and Reuters press reports state French have reinforced Phnom Penh with African and Vietnamese troops and these units now

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[1] Drafted by John I. Getz of PSA. Also sent to Paris as telegram 15 and to Phnom Penh as telegram 2.

confront Cambodian forces set by King to guard public buildings. Reports mobilization Cambodia most disturbing. Potentialities this situation obvious and could endanger entire anti-Communist defense Southeast Asia.

If Saigon and Phnom Penh confirm reports and unless Chiefs Mission perceive strong objection on basis unreported facts, Ambassador Heath and Dillon should make earliest inquiries Prime Ministers or Foreign Ministers Cambodia and France, stating concern lest incidents might develop. In addition to natural distaste with which we would view such developments we would expect extensive adverse reaction by United States Congress and press since adversaries largely equipped with arms supplied by United States for anti-Communist purpose. Outbreak hostilities between France and Cambodia would greatly complicate understanding of issues Indochina in this country. Without prejudice to rights either party or merits case, we trust every possible measure prudence will be developed and enjoined by responsible authorities on local commanders.

Should be pointed out that new government France must be allowed make examination of case and negotiations still current. Desirability and feasibility earliest possible conference between Prime Ministers and high level French representative, perhaps cabinet member with full authority, might also be investigated.

Heath authorized at discretion to fly Siem Reap present this argument to King if he feels visit necessary make it register. Inform Department soon as possible in this event as we contemplate release information *démarche* being made in Paris and Siem Reap.

French authorities Paris–Saigon as well as King should know identic *démarche* being made both in Indochina and France.

It occurs to us here that possible alleviating measures might be removal African and Vietnamese troops outside Phnom Penh, with prior evacuation French inhabitants if necessary, replacement of troops with white French or non-Vietnamese police, drawn from Saigon if necessary, and conciliatory public statements both sides, including French officials. Views Embassies requested as to value specific recommendation this nature being made by United States Government.

It is view here trend of situation may have gone beyond power of King to control or to reverse; in this situation hope French will demonstrate greatest patience to avoid provocative measures. As for United States, if situation as reported exists, we fear chain reaction which would render vastly more difficult achievement of valid French Union and defense Free World interests Southeast Asia.

DULLES

751G.5/7–253 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET SAIGON, July 2, 1953—2 p. m.

7. Repeated information Paris. For Johnson (FE) from Bonsal. General O'Daniel yesterday sent telegram to JCS via CINCPAC transmitting General Navarre's "principles for the conduct of the war in Indochina" and O'Daniel's comments thereon.[2] He requested copy sent Department. When received, please repeat Paris.

Navarre's "principles" reflect in my judgment O'Daniel's impact here. Navarre has clearly moved forward from position he described to O'Daniel mission at June 21 briefing (see Saigon telegram 2552, repeated to Paris 474).[3] Navarre's own attitude toward situation has been sharpened and his plans accelerated by his talks with O'Daniel and presence of mission here.

Navarre left today for Paris where he will attempt sell his concept of offensive operation to new French Government. Vital part that concept is need for equivalent from one to two divisions fresh troops from French Union to be made available as soon as possible. Such additional troops added to battle corps already at disposal French High Command appear offer only practical means to give command adequate capabilities coping with enemy and reversing current military trend this fall. O'Daniel had hoped troops could be drawn from other parts Vietnam and that mission of new commando levies might be changed to permit their use in offensive operations but he now concedes that early implementation these possibilities would be unattainable in view conditions here. Therefore, additional French Union troops essential.

I recommend Embassy Paris receive instructions from Secretary to give discreet yet effective support to Navarre concept. Points which occur to me in drafting of Department instructions are following:

1. Navarre concept must not be thought of as creating conflict with NATO requirements. It should be clearly apparent that France cannot play full role in European defense (1) as long as Indochina drain continues at present level or (2) if France were confronted with inevitable consequences of a disastrous or dishonorable retreat in Indochina. Victory in Indochina is key to France's playing full part in Europe. French (Navarre) and US (O'Daniel) military thinking indicates such victory is possible. For reasons with which Department abundantly familiar, delay in reversing military trends here could well have serious repercussion in political plane in France and in Vietnam. Furthermore, now, rather than after effective German contribution to

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

[2] Dated June 30, p. 624.

[3] Dated June 24, p. 616.

European defense begins to threaten new problems for French, is time when maximum French effort here is possible.

2. We should support forward looking political thinking which would reverse adverse political trends here at same time that evidence is being given of determination and ability to reverse military trends. In phrase of General Navarre, period of rug merchant tactics should be considered ended. A final French position as to the independence of the Associated States and as to what France expects within framework of French Union in return for her continued participation in the development and defense of these states is essential. The timing of any specific renegotiation of existing agreements should perhaps be dependent on favorable military developments. This would not, however, preclude an immediate statement of general intention to be made by the new French Government perhaps at time of French Union meeting this month.

3. O'Daniel mission has under study number of specific ways in which Franco-Vietnamese military effort can be made more effective. I would hope that these important recommendations when formulated and thoroughly examined at working level would have needed high level support for prompt implementation.

4. It may be that we can help in transport of additional French Union troops to Indochina above those presently contemplated. I mentioned this matter to Admiral Radford on June 17; he made no commitment but seemed believe there were possibilities.

5. Now that Pleven is reaffirmed as Defense Minister, we should follow up approach already initiated regarding Air Force personnel ceiling here. (Impression given by O'Daniel mission is that though conditions in French Air Force here have improved since Secretary Defense wrote Department this subject,[4] lifting personnel ceiling is vital if Air Force is to meet expected demands).

Concurrently, it would be my hope Congress action on MSA appropriations would enable us advise French and Associated States of exact nature aid to be anticipated from US. Also, I am increasingly impressed with desirability giving French such indications as may be possible concerning actual support US could render in event Chinese Communist aggression against Indochina as result vigorous Franco-Vietnamese offensive against Viet Minh.

Offroy, diplomatic advisor to High Commissioner here, has spoken to me several times regarding political necessity from point of view French Government of giving French public impression every avenue exhausted to secure consideration Indochina problem at time of Korean political conference or in event Four-Power discussions. Offroy has mentioned as example possibility refusing lift current UN embargo on China trade until supplies to Viet Minh from Communist China are cut off. I have given him no encouragement on this score.

Ambassador Heath concurs.

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[4] For the text of the letter from Secretary of Defense Wilson to Secretary of State Dulles, May 16, see telegram 5693 to Paris, May 21, p. 576.

If Department believes desirable, Bonsal could return Washington in time for Foreign Ministers' meeting which press here reports scheduled for July 10.[5]

HEATH

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[5] Telegram 24 to Saigon, July 3, read as follows: "For Bonsal. Embtel 7 very helpful. O'Daniel telegram not yet received by JCS. Believe desirable that if possible Bonsal return Washington for Foreign Ministers meeting arriving about July 10. Bilateral talks with French on Indochina scheduled begin July 12. If desirable Bonsal could return Honolulu after Foreign Minister meeting to work with O'Daniel on report in light results meeting." (751G.5/7–253)

751G.00/7–253: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, July 2, 1953—2 p. m.

22. Repeated information niact Saigon 2 for Heath. Eyes only for the Secretary. Saw Laniel this morning in accordance instructions Deptel 15.[1] He called in Reynaud who took leading part during entire course of conference. Reynaud now in over-all charge of Associated States' matters assisted by a Secretary of State and elements of former Ministry of AS. Reynaud's office is in Hotel Matignon next to Laniel.

In view of way conversation developed I limited my message to expression of grave concern on part of United States over possibility of incidents between troops and did not make any suggestions for alleviation of situation along lines mentioned as possibility in penultimate paragraph reftel. In view of new French policy outlined below I do not believe United States should take any further action for time being.

Reynaud said that French Government fully aware of seriousness of situation and Cabinet has met twice recently on subject. Final meeting scheduled for tonight. Reynaud also said French Government planned issue statement within 24 hours promising full and complete independence and sovereignty to all three Associated States. This would naturally include right of each state to decide for itself whether or not it would remain in French Union. Wording of statement is naturally difficult task and is reason for series of Cabinet meetings on this subject. Extreme importance of keeping matter absolutely confidential and preventing any possible leak prior to Government's announcement in Paris is evident. Whole program might be upset by leak giving impression that French were acting under pressure from United States. At this time only handful of top ministerial level officials in French Government knows of this decision.

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[1] Same as telegram 8 to Saigon, July 1, p. 626.

Reynaud said French Government recognized wave of nationalism sweeping Asia could not be opposed and that independence was question of all or nothing. This is motivating factor in French decision.

Reynaud felt sure Vietnam and Laos would remain on in French Union but was not sure about Cambodia which owes much less to France and depends less on French assistance.

Regarding troops in Cambodia Reynaud repeated same story as outlined in Embtel 8, July 1 [2] except that he did not know exact composition of battalions sent in as reinforcements and specifically stated that there might be Vietnamese units among these battalions.

Reynaud felt French declaration should clear air both in Indochina and in United States. He was very much interested in impression statement would make in United States. I feel you should be prepared to issue statement very promptly expressing our pleasure at this new constructive step and giving our wholehearted support to French on basis this new policy. This presupposes that statement when issued is as described to me and set forth above.

Reynaud, however, still has some reservation about situation in Cambodia which he considers to be characterized by high emotional excitement whipped up by Buddhist bonzes. He feels that leaders are prepared for national suicide if necessary and draws direct comparison between Norodom and Syngman Rhee. He remarked that Rhee and Norodom were apparently the two most popular figures in all Indochina because they were actively opposing Western powers.

French Government will welcome all help possible from United States in calming Cambodians after statement regarding independence has been released.

We shall cable later precise time when declaration will be made here and whether or not it will incorporate any substantive changes from statement made to me this morning by Reynaud in presence of Laniel.

DILLON

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[2] Telegram 8 from Paris, July 1, concerning the French position on the necessity for sending reinforcements to Cambodia, is not printed. (751H.00/7-153)

751G.5/7-253 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, July 2, 1953—7 p. m.

30. Repeated information Saigon 3. During my conversation with Reynaud and Laniel this morning, Reynaud pointed out that Indochina situation must be seriously considered at Washington meeting. Review of situation must start completely *de novo* in view present situation in France and in Indochina.

On French side, the significant new development is the vote of 301 deputies for Mendes-France, who stood for negotiations with Ho Chi Minh and immediate pull out of French Forces. In considering Indochina policy, Reynaud pointed out that Communist vote must be added to Mendes-France vote, giving a total of 406 or approximately two-thirds of Parliament in favor of or willing to accept immediate and more or less unconditional withdrawal from Indochina.

He also pointed out that if Laniel Government should fall, it would most likely be succeeded by a Mendes-France Government. *Embassy comment:* This is a distinct possibility but not by any means the only possible solution to next crisis. *End comment.*

Therefore, Reynaud felt that period during which present government is in power represents last chance for US and free world to turn Indochina situation around so that French people can foresee definite and early end to conflict.

On Indochina side, it is now clear that Letourneau plan for arming Vietnam battalions is utterly inadequate, and much greater and quicker effort is needed to turn the military situation around, in the short time available.

I cannot over-emphasize seriousness with which this situation is taken by French Government. Financing of additional Vietnam effort required can come only from us, and if we are not prepared to make this effort very promptly, French likely to take this as proof that we are not substantially interested in defense of Indochina. At this point even present French Government may feel obliged to institute negotiations with Ho Chi Minh looking toward withdrawal. Reynaud specifically pointed out to me that present war in Indochina was preventing France from creating the necessary forces in Europe required to assure safety of France and Western civilization from Soviet attack.

It is not possible for me to estimate extra cost of military effort by Vietnamese forces required to assure early victory, but I feel certain that sum required will be very substantial.

DILLON

751G.02/7–353 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT SAIGON, July 3, 1953—5 p. m.

28. Sent niact Paris 11; repeated Department 28. Re Paris niact 2, July 2, sent Department 22.[1] View 24-hour release schedule planned French Government statement concerning full independence three

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[1] *Ante*, p. 630.

Associated States,[2] present message may come too late. Nevertheless, we wish state for record and for possible action Paris our opinion that French Government should not take impulsive action which may fail retrieve utmost from bad situation.

Delicate Cambodian situation clearly requires decisive, progressive move on part French and we extremely gratified France ready answer need by generous grant complete sovereignty. However, we feel France might inform heads three states privately before far-reaching decision made public in order ascertain what safe-guards Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians prepared offer France in return. This *démarche* would avoid appearance precipitate unilateral French move resulting from "blackmail" and would also permit Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos formulate reasoned policy vis-à-vis France and thus present world with agreement which might be expected be basis for mutually beneficial relations.

Indications here point to willingness Norodom Sihanouk come to terms with France, but example impetuous action New York, Bangkok, Battambang, Siemreap gives good cause anticipate further unorthodox moves, such as refusal remain in French Union following French Government announcement full independence as now planned, before consultation with three AS. Primary goal our policy IC continues be to keep French holding line against Commie aggressors. This French would hardly wish to do should Cambodian King withdraw from all obligations toward France. Detailed negotiations on new treaties or agreements before issuance of statement would probably be so time-consuming as to vitiate psychological benefit French generosity not only in Associated States but also before international opinion; prompt informal and general sounding-out of three AS, on other hand, seems to us to be both prudent and courteous.

We fully in accord Dillon belief US should not dictate *modus operandi* to French inasmuch as latter have already evolved program. We suggest, however, that at Dillon's discretion, subject Department approval, above line of thinking might be communicated to French Government in interests avoiding hasty and wasteful action. This telegram supplements thoughts expressed my telegram 5 to Department July 1.[3]

HEATH

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[2] For a translation of the French statement, see telegram 52 from Paris, July 3, *infra*.

[3] In telegram 5 from Saigon, July 1, not printed, Ambassador Heath suggested that Ambassador Dillon should make inquiry regarding French policy with respect to the Cambodian situation without recommending any specific course of action to French officials. (651.51J/7–153)

751G.00/7–353 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PRIORITY PARIS, July 3, 1953—10 p. m.

52. Repeated information Saigon priority 8, London unnumbered, Phnom Penh 5, Vientiane 3. Roux has given us text of notes handed three High Commissioners Associated States today and which he tells us is being given press this evening for publication tomorrow.[1] Following is free translation text:

"Council of Ministers French Republic has met and examined relations of France with Associated States Indochina.

"It considers time has come to adapt accords concluded by them with France to the status that they have known how to acquire with France's entire support in the community of free peoples.

"Respectful of national traditions and of human liberties, France in course of a cooperation soon a century-old has led Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to full blossoming of their personality and has maintained their national unity.

"By the accords of 1949, France has recognized their independence and they have accepted association with France in French Union.

"Government of Republic desires make today solemn declaration.

"During interval of four years which has passed since signature of accords, the brotherhood of arms has affirmed itself more between the armies of French Union and national armies of Associated States thanks to development of latter who take each day a part more important against common enemy.

"At same time, the civil institutions of three nations have been put in position to resume ensemble of powers incumbent on modern states, while international recognition ("audience") of their governments has extended to majority of countries who constitute UN.

"France believes ("juge") that, under these conditions, there is ground for perfecting the independence and sovereignty of Associated States in assuring, in agreement with each one of three interested governments, the transfer of powers ("competences") that France had still retained in the interest even of the States, by reason of the perilous circumstances arising from state of war.

"The French Government has decided to invite ("convier") each one of the three governments to come to an agreement ("convenir") with it on the settlement of the questions that each one of them will consider it ought to pose in economic, financial, judicial, military and political fields, in the respect and the safeguard ("dans le respect et la sauvegarde") of the legitimate interests of each of the contracting parties.

"Government of Republic expresses wish that an agreement ("entente") on these different points will tighten the bonds of friendship which unite France and Associated States in French Union."

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[1] For the official French text, released July 3, see *L'Année Politique, 1953*, pp. 578–579, or *Documents on International Affairs, 1953*, pp. 470–471.

Roux states position taken notes represents significant development and is in line with policy advocated for some time by Foreign Office. He points out that it is too early to say what Associated States reaction will be; however, believes Vietnam and Laos attitude will be favorable but that of Cambodia unpredictable. He also states appointment career diplomat Dejean[2] Commissioner General Indochina concrete evidence France moving direction tenor notes handed Associated States today.[3]

DILLON

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[2] Maurice Dejean, Director General for Political Affairs, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1944–1945; Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, 1945–1949; Representative to the International Authority for the Ruhr, 1949–1950; Chief of the French Mission to SCAP, Tokyo, 1950–1952; Ambassador to Japan since 1952. Dejean's appointment as Commissioner General for Indochina was announced on July 3.

[3] In telegram 64 to Paris, July 4, the Department of State instructed Ambassador Dillon to convey to the French Government the Department's "great pleasure and satisfaction at realistic and forward-looking steps" which France had taken in regard to the Indochina problem. (751G.00/7-353)

751G.00/7-653: Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, July 6, 1953—6 p. m.

69. Repeated information Saigon 9, info Phnom Penh 6, Vientiane 4, London unn; pouched Frankfort for Satterthwaite. All information available to us indicates that recent French policy decisions re IC reflect compromise between divergent views in Cabinet. It is believed that Reynaud was moving force behind position taken and that final text was adjustment between his and Bidault's views. This is revealed in part in press conference Reynaud held with small group American correspondents shortly before release of text on evening July 3. Foreign Office officials had told United States correspondent during day that new talks with Associated States would take place within framework of March 1949 accords with implication discussions would represent evolution and freer interpretation these accords. Reynaud in press conference made clear to correspondents that this was not correct and that entire basis Franco-Associated States relations would be discussed if latter so wished, as was expected to be case. Commentary handed to press at time text of declaration released goes somewhat farther than text in saying "bonds which will unite Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to France will carry with them no limitations on their independence other than those which will be freely agreed to" and "nature of these bonds will be defined between contracting parties dealing on equal basis and without restraint".

Margerie's interpretation to us of new policy decision is for example, less liberal than that given us by Tezenas du Montcel. Former speaks of need for increased Associated States participation in conduct of their affairs and need for increased participation in war effort but does not give impression of as far-reaching new look as does Reynaud in his press conference, Tezenas in his statements to us or informal commentary released with text. *Figaro* of July 4–5 strikes what is perhaps proper note in this regard when it concludes its article re IC decisions with statement "nations are judged more, and better, as are men, by acts rather than by texts" and "acts of French Government must be tomorrow the exact reflection of promises loyally made and commitments freely given". Implementation new decisions vis-à-vis Associated States will be test.

One of most promising notes struck is appointment Dejean, career Foreign Office official, ex-Commissioner General. Margerie tells us his appointment made for several reasons: (1) he was one of two private secretaries to Reynaud in late thirties and thus well-known and trusted by Reynaud, who wished have person at Saigon in whom he had confidence; (2) Dejean had been well-received by Vietnamese on trips there since he had been chief of mission in Tokyo and he had been particularly helpful to Associated States in their relations with Japan; (3) Dejean was fully familiar with Far Eastern problems, including IC; and (4) his relations with United States military and civil officials in Japan had been excellent. With his background Dejean should be able bring new and fresh approach to IC situation and inspire confidence in new French Look.

An important point which has not been made clear publicly in light of recent developments is that of right of Associated States to have choice of remaining in or withdrawing from French Union. Reynaud told me in presence Laniel July 2, each state would have right to decide whether or not remain in union. Associated Press Bureau Chief who was present at Reynaud's press conference tells us, however, Reynaud straddled this one by saying that this was unrealistic question in that they would not consider withdrawals since without French aid as par to French Union they would fall to Communists sovereignty. In reply to our query in this regard, Margerie tells us this was debated at some length in Cabinet meeting. He said some Cabinet members wished to make clear in public statement that Associated States were free to make their choice re continued membership in French Union but that other members were strongly opposed to public statement of this nature with result that question was not met head on. Text of communication does, however, make clear French desire and expectation that Associated States will remain in French Union.

We are reliably told that Reynaud has said he would not himself conduct talks or negotiations with Associated States in implementation new decisions since he did not wish to restrict his field of activities solely to IC problems but desired be free to act in much broader fields. However, Reynaud's personal interest in IC and forward-looking approach to problem augurs well for French attitude in future discussions with Associated States and he would be expected to give guiding hand to such negotiations. Next move is now up to Associated States and it is somewhat disquieting to note that first press reports here of Associated States attitudes speak of "reserve at Saigon".[1]

While United States attitude toward French policy IC must be fairly clear to French Government, we believe that it has been helpful here in terms of French reactions to recent policy decisions that latter have been initiated by French themselves. Initial French reaction appears to have been generally favorable, which might not have been case had critics been in position to picture decisions as having been made under American pressure.

ACHILLES

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[1] Telegram 33 from Saigon, July 5, read as follows: "Initial reaction Vietnamese here to declaration handed by Laniel to three high commissioners Associated States July 3 one of reserve approaching skepticism. General attitude is France has made many promises in past; judgment to be withheld until French spell out intentions and give evidence good faith by concrete actions. Even French here admit legalistic wording declaration such that it could not expect capture imagination peoples Associated States. Manifesting some disappointment over declarations, Offroy observed to me too bad statement drafted in Paris without consultation any qualified French officials in Indochina who could have contributed probably worth-while suggestions." (751G.00/7-553)

751H.00/7-653

Memorandum of Conversation, by Robert Hoey and John Getz of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] July 6, 1953.

Subject: Current Situation in Cambodia

Participants: Mr. Nong Kimny, Ambassador of Cambodia
Mr. Robert E. Hoey, PSA
Mr. John I. Getz, PSA

The Ambassador called at four o'clock today on instruction to discuss the present situation in Cambodia. In discussing the provocative measures taken by the French in Cambodia he noted that the French forces are taking over public buildings in Phnom Penh, such as the Banque de l'Indochine. Reports that the Cambodian Army has taken over public buildings are false. The Minister of Interior was detained for some time by the French forces while he was on his way to a cabinet meeting.

On the French offer to negotiate of July 3, 1953: The Cambodian Government does not feel that this offer goes far enough. His Government (apparently before the French announcement) told the French Government that if the French would issue a statement that Cambodia was independent, the Cambodian Government would simultaneously issue a statement of adherence to the French Union. The Ambassador feels that the French issued the July 3d statement so that their position in the upcoming Foreign Ministers' Conference will be stronger.

Knowing that Indochina will be discussed at the Foreign Ministers' Conference, the Ambassador handed Mr. Hoey a note (attached) asking that Cambodia's position concerning the suggested exchange of declarations be made clear at the conference.

Mr. Hoey then explained the meaning of the Department's announcement of Noon today,[1] approving the French offer to negotiate, as not a taking of sides with the French, but rather a belief that the French have taken a concrete step toward solution of the problems confronting the two countries; the French offer is all the more interesting since it does not impose any limits on concessions which the Associated States might gain in the negotiations. It is regretted that the offer was not made in a more dramatic fashion. We feel, however, that the offer is a real measure of the liberal attitude of the new French Government, a feeling reinforced by the appointment of a French career diplomat as new Commissioner General for the Associated States. The Ambassador then admitted that he wished that his government could back down somewhat on the extreme stand which it has taken.

[Attachment]

Translation of Note From the Cambodian Embassy to the Department of State

WASHINGTON, July 6, 1953.

The Royal Embassy of Cambodia presents its compliments to the Department of State and has the honor to make known, in accordance with instructions from the Royal Cambodian Government, that the present position of His Majesty and of His Government on the subject of the question of the independence of the Kingdom is the following:

As the Prime Minister of the Cambodian Government made known to the High Commissioner of the French Republic in Cambodia in an official note of June 30, the Royal Government proposes that:

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[1] The *New York Times* of July 7 (p. 3) reported that the United States had, on July 6, welcomed the French offer to negotiate the independence issue with the Associated States and pledged its "whole-hearted support." The form of the announcement was not indicated.

1. A declaration according complete independence and sovereignty to the Kingdom be made by France.
2. On its side, Cambodia will declare simultaneously its adherence to the French Union with a statute at least equal to that of India in the British Commonwealth.

The Royal Cambodian Government, considering that the Indochina question will be raised at the Conference of the three Foreign Ministers of July 10, 1953, would be grateful to the Department of State if it would kindly make clear these points of the Cambodian position during the course of the conversations.

The Royal Embassy of Cambodia takes the occasion of this note to present to the Department of State the assurances of its very high consideration.

(Initialled: N.K.)

751G.00/7-653

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of Thai and Malayan Affairs (Landon)[1]

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] July 6, 1953.

Subject: Thai Government's Views regarding Indochina.

Participants: The Secretary of State
His Excellency, Pote Sarasin, Ambassador of Thailand
Mr. David P. Wainhouse—UNP
Mr. Kenneth P. Landon—PSA

The Thai Ambassador called on the Secretary and expressed the appreciation of the Thai Government for the opportunity to express its views on the question of Indochina which will be one of the topics for discussion at the forthcoming Ministers' conference. He said that the Thai Government is anxious to see the three Associated States enjoy real and full independence at the earliest possible moment; that the immediate withdrawal of the French, however, would be unsatisfactory in view of inadequate regional arrangements or of a pact for collective security inasmuch as the three Associated States are not in a position to defend themselves; that although the United States Government is no doubt studying the question of regional collective security in southeast Asia it will be some time before a regional pact or arrangement can be achieved; that, therefore, the Thai Government makes the following practical suggestions for immediate action:

a. That more troops of the Associated States be trained;

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[1] This meeting was summarized in telegram 61 to Bangkok, July 9 (repeated to Saigon, Paris, and New York). (751G.00/7-953)

b. That the United States give direct military and economic assistance to the three Associated States in addition to the aid and assistance given to the French;

c. That the fullest possible measure of autonomy should now be granted to the three Associated States.

The Thai Ambassador adverted to the possible Thai case of threat to international peace before the United Nations Security Council and said that his Government believed that there are other urgent international questions of critical importance to be considered at the present time and that, therefore, the submission of this case should be deferred to a more favorable moment.

The Secretary expressed his appreciation for the Thai Government's views regarding Indochina and assured the Ambassador that after the Ministers' conference was held he would invite him to call in order to give him the substance of the discussion. In regard to the possible Thai case before the Security Council he remarked that doubtless what the Thai Government had in mind was to defer the matter not to a more favorable moment but to a more unfavorable moment, implying an occasion of renewed threat. The Thai Ambassador laughingly agreed.[2] The Secretary then asked the Ambassador if his Government felt concerned about the Indochina situation and the Ambassador explained that his Government was, indeed, deeply concerned about the situation on its eastern borders.

[Here follows a brief account of discussion regarding the possible appointment of General William A. Donovan as United States Ambassador to Thailand.]

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[2] Secretary Dulles discussed the subject with French Ambassador Bonnet on July 15. The Secretary's memorandum of that conversation read in part as follows: "We had rather a stormy but altogether friendly talk, in which I again expressed my total inability to comprehend why the French so violently opposed Thailand's having recourse to the protective machinery which was provided for it by the UN." (751J.00/7–1553)

PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] July 6, 1953.

While this is a long paper,[2] I believe you should read it. At the meetings, the French will probably not inform us that they are about

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[1] Robert R. Bowie became Director of the Policy Planning Staff on May 18, 1953. This memorandum was drafted by Edmund A. Gullion of the Staff.

[2] The attached paper, a draft of July 6 prepared by Gullion and titled "Indochina at the Crossroads," is not printed. The 13-page paper was circulated in document STF D–2, July 6, which included an abstract reading as follows:

"Although the Mayer Mission last March outlined a general plan for a military to pull out of Indochina, but they are likely to indicate at the meeting that the end of the road is approaching.

This paper seeks to explore the consequences for the United States of a negotiated peace in Indochina. It seems to me to require our Government to be prepared to answer three major questions:

a. If the French, as they undoubtedly will, ask us for massive budgetary assistance, what assurances can we give them in view of the temper of Congress to eliminate foreign aid in a year or so? Can we extend any hope of special appropriations for French budgetary relief even after MSA expires? (The need now is for budgetary rather than material aid. Without assurance of continuing assistance, the French are likely to put a term to their resistance.)

b. If, despite loss of prestige and investments, the French should be inclined to leave anyway what means do we have to persuade them to stay?

c. Is Indochina so important to our security that American forces should be used there even in the absence of Chinese Communist intervention? Should not NSC at least be examining this question?

These points can certainly not be settled while the French are here. But they are certain to be raised. Would it not be well to discuss some of them with Defense and some Congressional leaders before the Conference?

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solution of the Indochina problem within two years, it is increasingly likely that the current French Government or its successor will be forced to transfer its hopes and efforts to some kind of negotiated peace . . .

"Contrary to the situation in Korea, it is difficult to conceive of any negotiated peace in Indochina that would not result in the loss of the entire country to the Communists, possibly followed by the loss of all Southeast Asia . . .

"The loss of Indochina would endanger the security of the United States; the fight must be continued to a decision if possible, or at least to the point where Indochinese troops who are convinced that they have something to fight for, bear the main burden; we should strongly discourage French efforts to negotiate peace or to withdraw prematurely; to the measure that it works toward these goals, we should give increased material and moral support to the Laniel Government; and we should make an early determination as to whether we should use American armed force in case of defeat or default by the French, even in the absence of a Chinese aggression." (PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "Indochina") The ellipses in the quotation appear in the source text.

396.1 WA/7–753

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] July 7, 1953.

In discussing the forthcoming Foreign Ministers' meeting with the President tomorrow morning,[1] I would suggest that you first outline the schedule of meetings to him: tripartite meetings Friday afternoon,[2] Saturday morning, Monday afternoon, and Tuesday afternoon; bilateral with the British on Saturday afternoon and Tuesday morning; bilaterals with the French on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning.

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[1] No record of the Dulles–Eisenhower meeting has been found in Department of State files.

I would then show him a copy of the agenda (attached)[3] for the tripartite meetings. You might explain to him that aside from Korea and depending upon developments there at the last moment, the two big subjects with which the meetings will deal are Germany and Indochina.

[Here follows one paragraph of discussion on Germany.]

Indochina.

I think it would be advisable to warn the President that the French will approach us on Indochina in a different key than heretofore. In other words, it is no longer a question of inducing the French to maintain their effort indefinitely in Indochina for $50,000,000 or $100,000,000 of additional aid. Instead, the French would probably tell us that the present Laniel Government is the last government in a position to work toward a solution in Indochina better than out-and-out negotiations with the Communists, leading to evacuation. This is probably so. The French will probably make three major points: (1) as long as it is proposed to negotiate the Korean settlement in multilateral forum, why would this not be proper for Indochina?; (2) the French will stress the recent initiative which they have taken with the Associated States with a view to granting them in fact the independence they have been given in theory; (3) following the above point, the French will stress the French public's insistence for a decrease in France's Indochina effort and will seek to justify such a decrease on the grounds that there is no reason why they should continue to make the same sacrifices for their three sovereign partners in the French Union.

Our main objectives will be (1) to seek to restrain the French Government from making any impulsive decisions concerning direct negotiations with the Communists and withdrawing from Indochina; (2) essentially, we think that time must be gained so that the recent liberal step taken by the French can become translated first into actions and second into a greater realization on the part of the people of the Associated States that they are fighting for themselves and not for the French; (3) it seems to us that the only ray of hope in Indochina lies in an increase in the local armies (and particularly the training of officers) in accordance with a radically stepped-up tempo as compared to heretofore; (4) we will strongly oppose the introduction of Indochina in any Far East negotiations in view of the likelihood that this would lead to undesirable concessions elsewhere.

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[2] July 10.

[3] The attachment does not accompany the source text.

Lastly, you might mention to the President that a new look should be taken at present US policy with a view to determining what we should do in Southeast Asia should the worst come to the worst and French pull out in the near future.

751G.5/7–853 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, July 8, 1953—4 p. m.

106. Repeated information Saigon 16. Reference Embtel 30.[1] During calls yesterday to present Ambassador Hughes [2] to Pleven, Laniel and Reynaud, each of them brought up Indochina in vein similar to reference telegram. Occasion was taken to tell them, as Ambassador had previously told Bidault, of warm Washington reaction to latest independence proposals. Pleven was gloomiest and saw no satisfactory answer. He stated that desire to be rid of Indochina war was as strong a factor here now as desire to be rid of Korean war was in United States during election campaign and that prospect of Korean armistice made longing for Indochina armistice almost uncontrollable. He stated Gen. Navarre sought an increased military effort. This was out of question; it would be difficult to maintain existing effort.

In response to reminder that much of United States aid for fiscal year 1954 as agreed in April had been conditioned on increased effort in Indochina, he said he was fully aware of it and greatly disturbed by present situation. Present and prospective Vietnamese forces were inadequate, but France could do no more; pressure to end the fighting was too strong. If an armistice attempt failed, there might be greater popular support for war than now, but this was faint hope. It would be difficult to withstand popular pressure for withdrawal of French troops before Vietnamese were ready to replace them. Best hope was that promise and fact of greater independence would pull non-Communist nationalist elements away from Ho.

In response to suggestion that armistice in Indochina might be harder to reach than in Korea where there was at least relatively firm demarcation line, he agreed that in this respect at least, it would be far more difficult. Any attempt to draw line at narrow point between sea and Thailand frontier would safeguard south which was already 90 percent pacified, but would leave loyal Laos and Tonkin reservoir of rice and manpower to Communists with prospect south would succumb in year or two.

Laniel said merely that Navarre was optimistic, but wanted resources which could not be given him. Speaking more in general than of Indochina he said, "We hope you can help me for after me comes Mendes-France."

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[1] Dated July 2, p. 631.

[2] John C. Hughes, U.S. Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council with the rank of Ambassador.

Reynaud covered much same ground as reference telegram. In present atmosphere Navarre's hopes and demands were simply unrealistic. France was attempting too much for her strength and her first duty was in Europe. It was true that United States was bearing 40 percent of the Indochina burden, but 60 percent of cost of struggle fought for free world rather than for France was too much. Trouble was that France could see no light at end of tunnel. If present government could not negotiate some relatively satisfactory arrangement, Mendes-France would come in and negotiate far worse one. Meanwhile top priority must be given to winning increased loyalty of Viets and to building up their forces. Asked flatly if he envisaged United States bearing larger share of burden, he replied not necessarily and that United States assistance in supplying methods used for rapid training of Korean forces might help. In this connection, he implied that United States personnel experienced in training Koreans might be useful. He said he would also welcome specific United States suggestions and expressed interest in talking to Bonsal tomorrow.

ACHILLES

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 158

Position Paper Prepared in the Department of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] July 9, 1953.

STF D–2b

INDOCHINA—FRENCH POSITION

The French have informed us that Indochina is the only subject which they wish to discuss bipartitely with us.

During the recent prolonged French Government crisis, Mendès-France, Marie, Pinay, Laniel and Bidault all included in their investiture speeches statements to the effect that France somehow had to reduce her Indochina burden and that this would be discussed with the United States in the forthcoming meetings.

We can expect the French to raise the following points:

1. After seven years' expenditure of French blood and treasure it is now necessary for French to be able to "see the end of the tunnel".

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[1] This paper was drafted by Edmund A. Gullion of the Policy Planning Staff; Henry B. Day, Deputy Director of PSA; and Ridgway B. Knight, Acting Director of the Office of Western European Affairs. It was prepared for use in connection with bilateral talks with French officials which were slated to occur during the course of meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France at Washington, July 10–14. For documentation on the conference in general, particularly on its European aspects, see volume V.

Indefinite continuation along the lines of the past is now out of the question.

2. This French Government may be the last which can discuss Indochina in terms of seeking a military decision or even of holding the line; successor governments or even this government may be led to open direct negotiations with Ho Chi Minh.

3. France may seek to introduce Indochina into Far Eastern negotiations at the political conference following a Korean truce, or in a subsequent multipartite meeting. We may expect to hear the line that if negotiations are suitable for Korea they are indicated for Indochina.

4. Minimum condition for continuation of French effort at present rate to give a chance of success to new military and political plans will in all likelihood be a marked increase in US assistance, i.e., involving a sizable amount of budget-supporting aid as well as equipment.

US TALKING POINTS

1. *Appreciation of French Effort*

a. Tribute to French Expeditionary Corps in Indochina and French Union troops.

b. Note wise and hopeful French decision for increasing sovereignty of Associated States.

c. We understand public sentiment in France especially as articulated during recent government crisis:—seven years of war—sacrifices in men and money.

d. We recognize situation is French responsibility, but in view of gravity of situation and its possible far-reaching consequences believe they would wish us speak with complete frankness.

2. *Negotiated Peace in Indochina not Possible or Desirable*

a. Preoccupation with Indochina natural when important negotiations proceeding in Korea and while consideration being given to possibility of other negotiation with Communists.

b. But even if Sino-Soviet-Viet Minh were willing to negotiate on Indochina, difficult to foresee how negotiations under present conditions would lead to anything other than *de facto* turnover to Communists sooner or later and probably sooner.

c. Unfortunately situation radically different in Indochina and Korea.

—no continuous front
—distribution of population very different

Korea 6 million North
23 million South
Vietnam 11 and 11

d. Negotiation with Ho Chi Minh bound increase his strength; he would dominate elections or any coalition government.

3. *Recommended Course of Action*

Seems to us an Indochina solution could be advanced by:

a. Decision to persevere.

b. Political moves granting "dominion status" in order to assure firm political and psychological base for military program. Recent French note event of historic importance; desirable to announce concrete follow-up soonest to gain maximum beneficial impact.

c. Sharp step-up in Associated States Armies program and particularly speed-up of officer training.

d. Vigorous offensive action, as projected by Generals Navarre and O'Daniel.

e. A temporary increase of French combat forces (possibly 10,000 men) would appear necessary to wrest initiative from Viet Minh. We feel present military trend must be reversed in the fighting season beginning in September or October if burden is ever to be turned over to native armies with prospect of success. French reinforcements might be withdrawn in phases as these forces take hold.

4. *Ways in which United States can Assist*

a. In case of reaction by Communist China to French Union successes:

1. Should an increased level of Chinese material aid to Viet Minh require it, we would undertake to increase ours; if an Armistice should release material from Korea, some of it can go to Indochina; we would modify our aid program in case Sino–Viet Minh should improve their weapons.

2. If Chinese should intervene directly—reaffirm assurances given to Mayer in March (subject to our constitutional limitations and possibly in framework of UN). Also we accept now French proposed addition to "Greater Sanctions Statement"[2] ("—we of opinion that Armistice must not result in jeopardizing restoration or safeguarding of peace in any other part of Asia.")

b. Although Congress, in economy mood, reasonably certain that appropriations can be obtained for continuing programs which give reasonable promise of solidity and success, particularly if developments arising out of July 3rd announcement prove mutually acceptable.

c. New French political program gives prospect for recognition of Associated States by additional Asian states. US prepared to aid in this respect.

d. We prepared give training assistance to native armies.

5. *Prospects for Success*

a. Realize this program not easy for France, politically or militarily, because of French people's desire to match German build-up in

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[2] For documentation on this subject, see volume xv.

EDC. Yet position of France in Europe and free world interest cannot enter more satisfactory phase until Indochina affair is safely wound up. We believe this positive program affords better chance of success than withdrawal or negotiated peace, which conceals within it difficulties and dangers, the full range of which we cannot fully appreciate at present.

751G.5/7-953 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, July 9, 1953—10 p. m.

61. Repeated information Paris 21. It is a tragic irony that defeatism of French Government (revealed in Paris telegram 16 of July 9 [*8*]) [1] should reach such a pitch at very moment when a new and competent French General—Navarre—is entirely convinced that with little additional effort or sacrifice by France victory can be wrested from Viet Minh in relatively near future to the enduring prestige and advantage of France, not only in Indochina, but for her world position as well. Navarre's conviction of success is entirely shared by General O'Daniel and all members of his mission who have just completed extensive and critical study on the ground of French capabilities and new offensive plans. Beginning at the Foreign Minister's conference in Washington and carrying on afterwards in Paris, we will have to make every effort to persuade French political leadership and public opinion of fact of the possibility, I would say certainty, of French victory, the advantages of such victory, and the loss to France in her African, European, and world position if she fails to take the victory which can be hers. I think that the President and the Secretary, Ambassador Dillon in Paris, Admiral Radford, General O'Daniel, General Gruenther,[2] and Bonsal should work on French political leaders to eradicate this highly understandable but unjustified defeatism with regard to the effort in Indochina. I am surprised that Reynaud would say that there was "no light at the end of the tunnel".

French gloom also seems incongruous in light recent progressive declaration concerning increased independence for Associated States, declaration which provides solid foundation for improved French Union relations, with logically expected result greater support French effort by Indochina states themselves.

I take it there has been no change in our view of strategic necessity of not merely holding communism in Indochina but of gaining an early victory over it. If it is necessary in order to obtain determined continuance of French military effort here, I believe it would be in our national interest to assume a greater share of financial burden. Aside from financial burden, French and French Union casualties in this war do not compare with our casualties in Korea. For twelve-month period ending May 31, 1953, total French Union and Associated States casualties were 25,080 but of this total only 8,460 were among French Metropolitan and French African troops. French Metropolitan and African troops killed in this period totalled 1,440.

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[1] Same as telegram 106 from Paris, p. 643.

[2] Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers in Europe, 1951–1953, succeeded Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe on July 10, 1953.

The temporary loan of 20,000 men from European front asked for by Navarre is obviously easily within French capabilities if there is the conviction of necessity of supplying them. I understand Admiral Radford said that if necessary the US Navy could undertake to transport these additional troops from Metropolitan France.

HEATH

State–JCS Meetings, lot 61 D 417

Substance of Discussions of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at the Pentagon Building, July 10, 1953, 11 a. m.[1]

TOP SECRET

PRESENT

General Collins
Admiral Fechteler
General Eddleman
General Ruffner
General Everest [2]
General White [3]
General Partridge [4]
Admiral Gardner [5]
Colonel Carns [6]
Captain Phillips [7]

Mr. H. Freeman Matthews
Mr. Robert Bowie
Mr. U. A. Johnson
Mr. Douglas MacArthur II
Mr. Edmund Gullion
Mr. Ridgway B. Knight
Mr. Chas. C. Stelle

NSC

General Gerhart
Mr. S. Everett Gleason

CIA

Mr. Amory [8]

[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

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[1] This State Department draft was not cleared with the participants.

[2] Lt. Gen. Frank F. Everest, USAF, Director of the Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[3] Gen. T. D. White, Vice Chief of Staff, USAF.

[4] Lt. Gen. Earle E. Partridge, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, USAF.

[5] Vice Adm. M. B. Gardner, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Operations).

[6] Col. Edwin H. J. Carns, USA, Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[7] Captain Richard H. Phillips, USN, Deputy Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[8] Robert Amory, Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency.

JCS Answers to Questions Concerning the Navarre Plan

(General Collins distributed the attached "Proposed Answers to Questions Concerning the Navarre Plan".)

Mr. Matthews: Before we get to your specific answers to the questions, could you tell us what your general reaction to the Navarre Plan is?

General Collins: We think that the plan as a plan is good enough provided they actually carry it out.

Mr. Matthews: Do you think it could be carried out without the two divisions from the outside?

General Collins: I don't see how from here the Chiefs can really pass on the exact force requirements for the Plan.

Mr. Bowie: What do you make of the difference between O'Daniel and Navarre as to whether the French could organize 3 or 5 divisions from the troops that are already on hand in Indochina?

General Collins: I agree that it isn't quite clear from O'Daniel's message[9] what the difference between them is based on, but O'Daniel has urged that we give support to Navarre's request for further divisions from France. Speaking purely as an individual, I would say that if the French really exerted themselves and took strong offensive action they have enough troops right now to do the job. I am not prophesying they will, but if they really organize into divisions and abandon the strictly defensive strategy that they have been following so far, it seems to me that they have sufficient forces to really inflict defeat on the Viet Minh.

Mr. Bowie: What is the relationship between your answers to questions 3 and 4? To question 3 your answer is that Southeast Asia is critically important to U.S. security interests. To question 4 your answer is that you are opposed to committing American ground forces in Indochina.

General Collins: We think that Southeast Asia is very important. From a military point of view, however, we are opposed to putting in U.S. forces and particularly under our present ceilings. If our political leaders want to put troops there we will of course do it, but we would have to have revision upward of our force ceilings.

Mr. Bowie: If we were faced with the loss of Indochina to the Communists what would your advice be from a military point of view?

General Collins: I think we would just have to sit down with our political leaders and talk the things over.

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[9] Dated June 30 p. 624.

Admiral Fechteler: We do have a Marine Division which is ready to go and which we could put in, although there again we would require an upward revision of our budget ceiling.

General Collins: It wouldn't just be a question of putting in one division. If we go into Indochina with American forces, we will be there for the long pull. Militarily and politically we would be in up to our necks. In Indochina we wouldn't have as advantageous a position as we have in Korea. For one thing if we started to put troops into the Tonkin Delta we would have to defend what has always struck me as a very vulnerable port at Haiphong. If I were the Commies I would have long since denied Haiphong to the French. The French don't have the port protected strongly on the north at all. Anytime the Commies really wanted to they could come in on the north of the port and get in a position to put artillery fire on the harbor. It seems to me that if we went into Indochina with U.S. forces, we would be in for a major and protracted war.

Enclosure [10]

Proposed Answers to Questions Concerning the Navarre Plan

1. Q. *Are the 2 extra Divisions (French) essential to the success of the Navarre operation?*

A. As stated in the O'Daniel report [11] one of the principles of the Navarre Plan for conduct of the war in Indochina is "To build up progressively a battle Corps by grouping battalions into regiments and regiments into divisions and by giving to the units thus created the necessary support—." In commenting on the plan, General O'Daniel stated that there are enough troops in Vietnam to organize at least 5 divisions for offensive action. However Navarre disagrees but he has agreed to organize 3 divisions of Vietnam troops for offensive operations in Tonkin Delta and plans to ask French Government for the bulk of 2 more French Divisions (strong in engineer and signal support) for decisive offensive operations this fall. Navarre's idea is to win the war in Indochina as soon as possible, and have the Vietnam Army take over and to withdraw the bulk of French forces to Europe. General O'Daniel's report indicates a need for additional forces in Indochina in order to attain an early decision. However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff are unable to estimate the number required.

2. Q. *What would the NATO say to this?*

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[10] The enclosure does not accompany the source text of the record of the meeting. The source text of the enclosure printed here, which is labeled "draft," is in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 157.

[11] See footnote 1, p. 616.

A. It is probable that NATO would object to the transfer of two French divisions to Indochina even though supported by the United States.

3. Q. *Is Southeast Asia essential from a military point of view?*

A. Yes. NSC 142/2 [*NSC 124/2*] states on page 1, paragraph 2, "Communist domination, by whatever means, of all Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short term, and critically endanger in the longer term United States security interests".[12] The primary U.S. military objective in the Far East is the security of the off-shore island chain. With respect to Southeast Asia, the U.S. objective is to prevent it from passing into the Communist orbit and to assist the indigenous governments and people to develop the will and ability to resist Communism from within and from without and to contribute to the strength of the free world. Southeast Asia is the principal world source of some strategically important commodities upon which the United States places great reliance. The loss of Southeast Asia could result in such economic and political pressures upon Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to Communism. Communist control of all of Southeast Asia would seriously threaten the U.S. position in the Pacific off-shore island chain and would seriously jeopardize fundamental U.S. security interests in the Far East.

4. Q. *Are we willing to commit 2 American divisions? If so, is there a Marine division available?*

A. No. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have stated that they are opposed to committing American ground forces in Indochina and, in addition, NSC 124/2 states on page 11, paragraph 10 *c* (3) that the U.S. expects France to carry the burden of providing, in conjunction with the Associated States, the ground forces for the defense of Indochina. In view of U.S. commitments to Korea and NATO and requirements for a strategic reserve, together with budgetary limitations, two American divisions cannot be committed to action in Indochina at this time.

5. Q. *How about getting the French to make a U.N. action out of this?*

A. The French have consistently opposed making this a U.N. action on the grounds that it is an internal civil action. However, from a military point of view, based on our experience in Korea, it is doubtful that anything would be gained by making the effort in Indochina a U.N. action.

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[12] For text of NSC 124/2, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia," a report approved by President Truman on June 25, 1952, see volume XII.

6. Q. *If so, could we put in Thailand and Philippine Divisions?*

A. The U.S. does not have control of Thailand and Philippine forces, and their forces probably could become available only as a result of Thailand and Philippine participation in U.N. action in Indochina. Even if desirable to involve the U.N. in French Indochina, neither Thailand nor the Philippines possesses military units of division size nor do the political and economic situations in either country permit them under present circumstances to offer more than token forces.

7. Q. *a. What would be the cost to the French to expand with the supporting units necessary for the reorganization?*

b. Is the pay of the native troops the same as French Troops?

A. *a.* In view of the preliminary nature of the O'Daniel report on the Navarre Plan, clarification is needed as to the French organization of the potential divisions and the type and scale of equipment before a suitable cost analysis can be made.

b. The base pay of French and native troops is essentially the same. However, French troops receive an allowance for foreign service in addition to base pay.

8. Q. *Could the United States support the requirements for additional equipment and at what cost (Estimate)?*

A. The United States could support the requirements for additional equipment in Indochina only at a sacrifice to other commitments. An estimate of the cost could not be made until the full French requirements have been stated.

751G.11/7–1053 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, July 10, 1953—11 a. m.

22. Repeated information Saigon 11, Paris 9. Governor Tri says that while delay in formation of Laniel government is one explanation of Bao Dai's postponing trip to France, an equally pressing reason is to be found in fact that about two weeks ago Emperor's pet dog was found to be rabid. On insistence of doctors, entire Imperial household, including number French, has been undergoing Pasteur treatment for past fortnight.

Bao Dai's course will be completed next week, at which time Tri expects him to take off promptly for France, especially since Empress has broken an arm at Cannes.

STURM

751H.00/7-1053: Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, July 10, 1953—1 p. m.

146. Repeated information Saigon 22. Limit distribution. In discussing Indochina with Bidault, Department should bear in mind division of opinion in French Cabinet on substance and particularly that between Bidault and Reynaud. We are unable to assess extent to which this last difference is due to substance, how much to personal factors and how much to present uncertainty as to division of responsibility for Indochina between Bidault and Foreign Office on one hand, and Reynaud and former Ministry of Associated States on other. This difference is reflected in Offroy's statement as reported in Embtel 144, July 10,[1] and in unconfirmed reports that Bidault threatened to resign during recent Cabinet meeting over wording of communiqué on greater independence for Associated States. During conversation reported Embtel 97, July 7,[2] Bidault spoke bitterly of Reynaud in general and of his views on Indochina is particular.

Some sources consider Bidault and his supporters as strongest partisans for continuation French effort Indochina and for French Union concept while Reynaud group, which has probably played major part in recent policy decision re status Associated States, is pictured as more likely to favor some kind stepped up French effort Indochina as detrimental to French position in Europe. There are naturally shadings in all these schools of thought but it must be remembered that Reynaud has primary responsibility for Indochina and that he is close to Laniel.

ACHILLES

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[1] The reference telegram read in part as follows:

"Offroy tells us that no important decisions re Indochina taken in Council of Ministers prior to Bidault's departure and that decisions will be made after Bidault's return from Washington in light of results of conversations, i.e., Bidault's impressions and general effect of exchange of views and ideas of what can be done in Indochina. Offroy says that French Government does not anticipate detailed commitments from United States and United Kingdom of what they can do to assist in Indochina but that it does expect obtain some general idea of what can be done which will in turn influence French decision. Offroy also says Navarre's plan still under study here and that to meet his needs fully would require use in some part of 'contingents', meaning legislative action by National Assembly. Consideration Navarre plan will also be affected by Washington talks. He further says Bidault is expected to bring up question of French Union with view to obtaining some statement that French Union is desirable and valuable concept and should be continued. He intimates that feeling here is that if French Union is of no value French have little reason for trying to preserve it in Indochina." (751G.00/7-1053)

[2] In telegram 97 from Paris, July 7, not printed, Ambassador Dillon reported that Bidault had showed him a telegram from the French High Commissioner in Cambodia which stated that one reason for the intransigence of the King was his belief that the United States would supply military and economic aid whether or not Cambodia broke with France. Bidault asked that the United States make it clear to the King that this was not the case. (751H.00/7-1053)

PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "Gullion"

Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] July 10, 1953.

Subject: Indochina

In your use of the "talking papers"[2] concerning Indochina, the following points may be particularly worth bearing in mind:

1. *Undesirability of a "negotiated peace"*. The geographical, historical and psychological reasons for this are hard to cover in a talking paper. Mr. Bonsal, just back from Saigon, via Paris, will be at the bilateral meeting and can supply detail, if required.

2. *The split in the French Cabinet.* Mr. Bidault represents the wing which would go slower on implementing the French pledge for more Associated States autonomy: Mr. Reynaud is said to be for more forthright independence. The difference is responsible for the diluted character of the French note to the Associated States. Our talking paper and the draft communiqué[3] are slanted to the farther-reaching solution. Ambassador Dillon has cleared them.

3. *Assurances to the French in case of Chinese intervention.* In line with the communiqué following the Mayer visit in March,[4] we may say that any armistice which released Chinese troops for action elsewhere would be a fraud and opposed to understanding on which armistice is based. However, the French may understand more by this than we can promise under our constitutional system and in conformity with our UN obligations. They should be given some understanding of the steps we would have to go through.

4. *Use of American troops.* In the Joint Chiefs paper attached to the "talking paper",[5] Indochina is said to be "essential" to United States security; on the other hand, the Joint Chiefs are not now prepared to recommend deployment of US forces in case the French leave or are defeated, short of Chinese intervention. Under the circumstances, I would not say that we had a firm position on this capital point.

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[1] Drafted by Gullion of S/P.

[2] For an abstract of document STF D–2, July 6, on Indochina, see footnote 2 to the memorandum by Bowie, p. 640. For position paper STF D–2b, "Indochina—French Position," July 9, see p. 644. Additional background material prepared for the Washington Foreign Ministers meeting of July 1953, is in Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 157–158.

[3] The draft communiqué has not been identified.

[4] For extract, see p. 436.

[5] Not identified.

751G.5/7–1153 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, July 11, 1953—noon.

26. Repeated information Saigon 14, Paris 12. General Cogny[1] yesterday described to me his conversation with General Hinh relative

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[1] Gen. René Cogny, Commander of French Union ground forces in Northern Vietnam since May 1953.

to latters expressed desire take over paramilitary forces of the north, and Cogny's subsequent conference with Governor Tri on the subject, in terms essentially similar to those reported Consulate telegram 21,[2] but with some slight shift in accent. Cogny said that Hinh's plan relates primarily to so-called pacified areas in which command would according to present arrangements have passed from French to Vietnamese hands. It is in these areas that Hinh would like to station his new light battalions and so arrange that all remaining paramilitary forces and the civil administration itself be made subordinate to local Vietnamese military commander. Apart from what Cogny called the "military dictatorship" aspect of this question and which he heartily disapproves on grounds that once regular enemy forces have been driven from an area, full pacification can be effected only by a strong civil administration working as nearly as possible within democratic pattern which it is hoped political institutions here will ultimately adopt, as general responsible for security of north he is troubled by probability that once a delta region has been declared "pacified" and passed from his command to national army, it may once again be overrun by Viet Minh forces. As example he cited Bui-Chu which is one of provinces designated for "pacification" and transfer, what dispositions will be taken after shift of command responsibility if entire Viet Minh division 320 turns up within provincial borders, a far from impossible eventuality? Cogny said that he had advised Hinh to proceed with moderation and "not try to break anything which is now working". With regard to Tri's threat to resign if popular forces are removed from Governor's control, Cogny said that during his 30 months in Tonkin the only Vietnamese team which showed imagination, courage and skill in meeting problems posed by the war had been furnished by Dai Viets, regardless of charges leveled against them by political opponents, and that for their tenure to be threatened in any way at this time is intolerable.

Cogny went on to say that he believes only possibility of winning war must be sought in full civil-military cooperation from top to bottom, such as appears exist in Viet Minh hierarchy. War cannot be won alone by French Union and national army troops, which he called "essentially mercenaries". The only popular forces which have yet appeared on this side of the lines are Tri's militia; they or some equivalent force are indispensable to consolidate victory in any given area. If these units were given over to army control, they would promptly lose the contact with the people, which constitutes their force, and become no more than an insignificant appendage to national army.

STURM

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[2] Telegram 21 from Hanoi, July 10, concerning the desire of Gen. Nguyen Van Hinh, Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese Army, to assimilate paramilitary forces into his command, is not printed. (751G.5/7-1053)

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 158

United States Minutes of the First United States-French Meeting at the Residence of the Secretary of State, Washington, July 12, 1953, 3 p.m.[1]

TOP SECRET

STF MIN 1

PARTICIPANTS

United States:	*French:*
The Secretary	Foreign Minister Bidault
Ambassador Dillon	Ambassador Bonnet
Mr. Merchant	M. de Margerie
Mr. MacArthur	M. Falaize[2]
Mr. Bowie	M. Roux
Mr. Bonsal	Colonel de Brebisson
Mr. Knight	M. Andronikov (Interpreter)
Mr. Glenn (Interpreter)	
Secretary Humphrey	
Mr. Stassen	
Mr. Nash	

Subject: Indochina

M. Bidault opened his statement on Indochina by saying that he would not conceal that his government is very much concerned at the situation, and particularly by the state of public opinion in France. He recalled that Mendes-France failed of approval as Prime Minister by only 12 votes on an investiture statement which included a proposal for the opening of negotiations in Indochina. It is true that his proposal was an extremely vague one. Nevertheless the French Government is confronted with the war weariness resulting from seven years of efforts and sacrifices. Especially in view of the probability of a Korean armistice, the situation confronting the new government is most delicate. The French people want the same for Indochina that is being achieved in Korea. The government is also faced with serious financial difficulties. The government wishes to fulfill its obligations to the Associated States and to be faithful to the international task which it has undertaken but it is faced with the difficulties mentioned. Peace, too, is contagious.

M. Bidault said that he would speak first of the political situation as it has developed following the July 3rd Declaration, then of the military situation and finally of the financial problems.

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[1] The source text indicates that these minutes were prepared by Bonsal of PSA and discussed with Knight of WE, but had not been cleared or approved. The minutes were circulated to U.S. officials as document STF MIN 1 on July 17. This meeting was summarized in telegram 180 to Paris, July 15 (pouched to Saigon, London, and Moscow). (396.1 WA/7–1553)

[2] Pierre-Louis Falaize, Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

On the political side, M. Bidault recognized that large sectors of foreign public opinion—especially in the US—had believed that the independence granted the Associated States by France was not as represented. M. Bidault said that he did not agree with this analysis but recognized that there might have been some slowness in the transfer of powers to the Associated States. He referred to the conservatism of local officials and to the difficulty of carrying out certain gestures. For that reason the new French Government, in view of difficulties in Cambodia and of other considerations, resolved to make the declaration of July 3rd. The declaration was well received by Bao Dai, by Tam and by the Vietnamese leaders in general. This had been also true in Laos. In Cambodia, except for certain reservations, there had been improvement.[3] The attitude of the King had changed but he had gone from one extreme to another, passing from complete discouragement to megalomania, as shown by his talk of raising an army of 150,000 men.

The conversations with each of the Associated States are to begin almost immediately and will take place with each state "with full respect for their independent status". The Associated States will be able to place what they wish on the agenda and they will get what they ask for. M. Bidault mentioned briefly some of the problems which will have to be solved, such as those in the economic-financial field (the bank of issue), the control of the traffic in piasters, the judicial problem—particularly that arising in Cambodia. He indicated in this connection that the French would not stand on the 1946 Treaty with China, but would try to find some way of giving the Associated States complete judicial independence. He said that the number of French functionaries in the Associated States has been decreasing and those to remain would be chosen by the Associated States. He intimated that the Associated States would probably be more anxious to keep these people than the French to withdraw them. M. Bidault expressed full understanding of the "problem of symbols". With regard to the Norodom Palace, he said that there might have been some slowness in French relinquishment of this symbol of sovereignty. He recalled, however, that when the French did offer to abandon the Palace over a year ago and requested other accommodations they received no reply from the Vietnamese authorities who probably preferred to continue to reside in the cool of the Highlands. They did receive an unsolicited letter from the King of Cambodia, stating that the Palace belonged in fact to all the States of Indochina and that therefore the French had no right to turn it over to the Vietnamese alone.

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[3] For the texts of the formal replies to the French note of July 3 by the Governments of Vietnam (July 6), Cambodia (July 12), and Laos (July 17), see *Documents on International Affairs, 1953*, pp. 471–474.

M. Bidault also recalled that M. Letourneau had been replaced as Commissioner General by M. Dejean, a diplomat well known to many Americans. He said this change also symbolized a new regime.

M. Bidault referred to the agreement made by Letourneau and Bao Dai, for the turn-over to the Vietnamese of military control of certain provinces. He said that this agreement had been much criticized in France (and by President Auriol) because of the reluctance of the Vietnamese to take over provinces where hostilities were still in progress and their tendency to confine their control to completely pacified areas.

In reply to the Secretary's question, M. Bidault said that he thought that the Vietnamese would wish to negotiate in Paris and the Laotians also. He said he had no idea what the Cambodians would wish to do, but he added that the French placed no absolute condition in this respect.

Turning to the military aspect of the situation, M. Bidault recalled the Letourneau–Allard plan involving increased military effort by the Associated States at a rate of 54 new light battalions in 1953 and in 1954 plus 27 such new battalions in 1955, making a total of 135. He said that this plan remains in force and is being carried out as scheduled. Acceleration is desired, but this means a re-examination of financial aspects.

M. Bidault said that General Navarre, the new Commander in Chief in Indochina, had been selected because of the outstanding qualities he had shown as Marshal Juin's Chief of Staff and because of the fact that he was not routine-minded. General Navarre has now evolved a new plan which involves not only the acceleration of the former plan but also an increase in the means to be made available to the French High Command in Indochina. This plan reached Paris at about the time of M. Bidault's departure. While this plan is now being studied by the Conseil Superieur, de la Défense Nationale, M. Bidault was authorized to mention it to the Secretary and to describe its major features. These are as follows:

a) A modification in the present organization of the expeditionary corps so as to produce a new type of mobile combat group for offensive action. Such groups are to be adapted to the special conditions prevailing in Indochina and are designed for the carrying out of strategic offensive operations, not just to counterattack when the enemy assumes the initiative.

b) An increase in the potential of the French Union forces in Indochina amounting to 12 French Union battalions with 50 helicopters. The naval forces are to be increased by 3 LST and 2 pocket Liberty ships. The Air Force is to be given an additional 30 C47's and 6 Beavers.

M. Bidault said that the furnishing of 12 battalions from the French Union involves serious consequences from the political and psychological points of view. He said that the French Chiefs of Staff had been consulted and had given an opinion that unless conscripts are sent to Indochina, the furnishing of these 12 additional battalions would involve the deactivation of important elements in the French forces in Europe and Africa because it would be necessary to strip officer, non-commissioned officer and professional soldier cadres from these units. The French Chiefs of Staff estimate that the following units would have to be dissolved or deactivated: 8 to 9 artillery groups, 6 to 7 engineer battalions, 4 tank regiments, 3 to 4 Signal Corps companies and 8 to 9 ordnance companies. M. Bidault stated that General Navarre has put forward this proposal as necessary under present conditions to regain the initiative for the Franco-Vietnamese forces. His proposal is not related to a possible Chinese Communist aggression.

M. Bidault stressed the unfortunate political and psychological effects of sending conscripts to Indochina, especially in an atmosphere of armistice in Korea.

Turning now to the military prospects in Indochina, M. Bidault said that enemy units are engaged in resting, training, and improving their offensive capabilities. They now have anti-aircraft and 105 MM artillery. Chinese aid is being sharply increased. M. Bidault estimated the amount of Chinese aid for the past three months at 10,000 tons monthly. He said that the enemy would be ready by September 15 and that they might direct their attention either to the Tonkin Delta or to upper Laos or to middle Laos and central Annam with the idea of cutting Indochina in two. He said that an enemy offensive aimed at Hue and Tourane in Central Annam would be most dangerous. From the French point of view even with the increases asked by General Navarre, the situation is one of a vast country where there is no frontier, where guerrilla activities are universal, where the French forces are widely dispersed and where there is a constant absorption of the combat reserve available to the French High Command. The latter is doing its best but is confronted with extremely heavy burdens. It must defend Laos, which is the size of Korea although it has but a million inhabitants, in order to meet French commitments to the government of Laos. It is essential to resume the strategic offensive and to increase the mobility of the units. M. Bidault said that more air and naval forces are needed. He emphasized that the French authorities have a plan, adding that it is essential to rethink the methods of war in Indochina.

With regard to finances, M. Bidault said that France was estimating 482 billion francs for the period January 1 to December 31, 1954. This does not include end-item assistance from the United States. M. Bidault estimated United States budgetary support for the period in question at $400 million or 140 billion francs, which has been authorized but not yet appropriated. As a further conjectural amount he indicated $40 million or 14 billion francs which the United States Government might be able to supply. He said that if the complete Navarre plan were accepted, the cost for 1954 above the figure which he had given would be about 20 billion francs additional. M. Bidault drew the Secretary's attention in the strongest terms to the concern of the French Government over its financial problem, particularly in the light of French public opinion and of the state of the French Treasury.

M. Bidault pointed to the basic and delicate political problem in the National Parliament where, generally speaking, those who support the Indochinese war (i.e., nationalistic elements) oppose the EDC and vice versa.

M. Bidault concluded with the suggestion that there should be made a joint examination of financial possibilities in connection with the Indochina enterprise. This would include a statement from the French as to the maximum they could supply plus a statement of what additional aid would be needed. He said that he was not asking for anything specific at this time.

Turning to the French Union, M. Bidault said that some people described the French Union as a prison and as a substitute for a colonial empire. It is in fact a community which does not prevent independent diplomatic relations on the part of its members or the form of government desired by each. Without this concept it would not be possible to retain parliamentary support for a war 12,000 kilometers from home. It is a necessary framework for the coordination of the various forces fighting in Indochina.

M. Bidault then referred to the NATO resolution of December 18 [*17*] "that the campaign waged by the French Union forces in Indochina deserves continuing support from the NATO governments". He wondered in this connection if France could get assistance from Britain or the United States vis-à-vis the King of Cambodia, who thinks that simply because he is anti-Communist he may be able to get the help he needs to remain independent elsewhere than from France. M. Bidault asked whether it would be possible for Britain and the United States to tell the King of Cambodia that the general interest would be served by his achieving independence within the French Union along the path indicated by the July 3rd Declaration of the French Government, and that this would be a great contribution to the defense of Southeast Asia from Communism.

M. Bidault then stated his hope that one theater of war in the Far East was to be closed—that in Korea. He recalled in this connection the Franco-American talks last March including the communiqué regarding the inter-dependence of the struggle in Korea and in Indochina, and also President Eisenhower's speech of April 16 in which the President gave the cessation of hostilities in Indochina as one of the hoped-for signs of a Communist desire for peace. M. Bidault stated that the French Government has been approached by a "professionally" neutral power suggesting that certain steps might be taken by the French at Peking in connection with the Indochina situation. M. Bidault stated that this suggestion had been rejected.

M. Bidault said that some way should be found of making clear at the forthcoming Korean political conference the inter-dependence of the war theaters in Asia. He recognized that this would be extremely difficult and he recalled recent Soviet and Chinese declarations regarding the situation in Indochina. M. Bidault, however, directed the Secretary's attention to the fact that the Indochina war must not be allowed to continue after the Korean situation has been settled. He referred to the possibility of aviation being supplied to the enemy in Indochina as a result of capabilities made available by the cessation of the war in Korea. He concluded with a plea for a vigorous attempt to stop the seven years' war in Indochina if the war is stopped in Korea, although he recognized the great difficulties involved.

The Secretary expressed great appreciation of M. Bidault's statement. He said that Indochina is an area which we recognize is of profound concern to the United States, and that otherwise we would not have made the contribution which we have made there. He recalled that the subject has been discussed by him with the French on two previous occasions since the Eisenhower Administration came into power: in March in Washington and in April in Paris at the time of the NATO discussions. The Secretary expressed his pleasure at being in continuing contact with M. Bidault on this important subject.

The Secretary recalled that M. Bidault's first topic was the political aspects. The Secretary stated that we are happy to recognize genuine and substantial progress along lines to which we have attached great importance. It must be made clear that this is not a colonial war but that it is an attempt by the enemy to destroy the liberty of free peoples.

The Secretary referred to the Norodom Palace as a symbol and hoped that a way would be found of making the proper symbolic gesture in spite of difficulties involved. The Secretary described the problem which we ourselves have faced in a similar context in Tokyo.

The Secretary stated that he had known Ambassador Dejean for many years and that he shared the high opinion of him expressed by M. Bidault.

The Secretary expressed the hope that something could be done to make clear and dramatic to the American people the important steps which have been taken by the French Government. The invitation contained in the July 3rd Declaration to the three governments of the Associated States to write their own ticket regarding continued association with France did not receive enough publicity here. It should be underlined. The Secretary said that even the President had not been aware of the true nature of the Declaration when it was issued. He added that this is a subject upon which we are frequently queried by Congress, and he stressed that the important step taken by the French had not been sufficiently dramatized. He hoped that the current meetings might provide some opportunity of restating what has taken place.

On the military side, the Secretary said that the analysis of the Navarre plan was one on which we could not yet pronounce ourselves. General O'Daniel is completing his report and the whole subject is being studied by the Pentagon. He said, however, that we welcomed the plan as one designed to take the initiative and to give greater mobility. He recalled that limited forces can be more effective when they are on the offensive than when they are waiting for the other side to assume the initiative. The Secretary recognized the guerrilla problem, of which M. Bidault had spoken, but recalled that in addition there are substantial organized enemy forces whose destruction is the aim of the Navarre plan. He added that with the necessary strength and spirit of initiative this result seems obtainable. It would change the whole complexion of the struggle, reduce its cost, and reduce it to proportions with which the armies of the Associated States could cope.

On the subject of further Chinese aggression, the Secretary said that there was a possibility that the Viet Minh forces might be strengthened either by Chinese volunteers or by aviation based on China. This would mean that the task ahead would be quite a different one from that which now confronts us. It would create a situation comparable to that which existed when the Chinese volunteers came into Korea and had aviation bases on fields north of the Yalu River. The Secretary stated that it seemed reasonable to him to make plans in Indochina on the basis that there would be no such development there because it is probable, and the Communists know that it is probable, that such an operation would lead to a rather general war in the Pacific area and that sea and air forces from the United States might be brought to bear in areas other than Indochina.

Assistant Secretary of Defense Nash stated that General O'Daniel is working on his report and has sent in a preliminary view of the Navarre plan, expressing the hope that the French may act favorably upon it. It appears to involve an effective use of available forces. Mr. Nash said that he hoped to have General O'Daniel come to Washington to present his views and his plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and that we will then have an appraisal of the situation.

Mr. Nash recalled that the United States is providing the arms needed for 54 light battalions being raised in Viet Nam in 1953 and that we have made certain arrangements requested by the French for C–47's and C–119's. He also mentioned the favorable developments in connection with the legislation for an added aircraft carrier which the French desire to borrow.

The Secretary at this juncture said that President Eisenhower had once remarked that in his military experience, "after you get through thinking of your own troubles, it is well to remember that the enemy has just as many." The Secretary then turned to M. Bidault's discussions of the financial prospects and to M. Bidault's statement that budget-supporting aid which the French could anticipate from the United States in calendar 1954 would be $400 million plus a conjectural $40 million.

Mr. Stassen interjected that this $40 million figure was probably $25 million. He said that legislation calls for not over $400 million for Indochina but that it also has in it an additional amount of not over $100 million to be expended on artillery for NATO forces. Mr. Stassen recalled that these figures exactly carry out the Franco-American discussions at Paris in April. He concluded that he expected within two weeks' time that we would know exactly how much Congress will appropriate.

The Secretary then stated that on the basis that the French Union is not a precise juridical concept but rather a broad idea, and that we looked with favor upon such broad concepts which hold different peoples in different parts of the world together in security and fellowship. No nation can be totally independent under present conditions. The Secretary mentioned the British Commonwealth and the Organization of American States and concluded that the French Union is a very admirable concept.

. . . .

Turning to the question of a possible end of the war in Korea, the Secretary said that he did not know yet whether there would be such an ending. He said that we are trying hard and doing all that we honorably can do but that he refuses to make any predictions.

If the war does end, continued the Secretary, it will not be because we merely wished it to end, but because we had developed and were prepared to take alternative measures which we believed would not be to the liking of the Communist enemy. He recalled that on the occasion of his return from the Pacific with the President and Secretary Humphrey last December, it was agreed that the way to end the war in Korea was to make the other side want to end it. We developed, and perhaps this came to the knowledge of the enemy, the measures which we are disposed to take.

The Secretary added that he would like to suggest that the way to bring the war in Indochina to an end, at least so far as the formally organized campaign is concerned, would be to take measures, or at least to have the will to take the measures outlined in the Navarre plan. The Secretary agreed with M. Bidault that peace is contagious and that it was natural for the people and Parliament of France to say that if there is peace in Korea why not in Indochina, but the Secretary stated that he could see no way less likely to end the war than to attempt to negotiate a settlement if the Franco-Associated States side has neither the will nor the capability to take steps to make the enemy want to bring the conflict to an end. The Secretary said that in our case we have not had to take the measures we had contemplated in Korea but the enemy's knowledge of the existence of those measures has undoubtedly helped to inspire the will in him to end the conflict.

The Secretary continued by stating that for the reasons which he had indicated rather than for merely diplomatic or technical reasons, he doubted if the Korean political conference would be either the time or place to negotiate on Indochina. The conference might, however, be both the time and place to reaffirm to the Chinese Communists that which was expressed in the Mayer Communiqué of last March and in the President's April 16 speech, and that the Chinese Communists might well be put on notice of the fact that, if ending the war in Korea is for them merely a means of releasing assets for aggressive use elsewhere, the armistice in Korea would be a fraud and would be treated as such. Unless the enemy proposes to negotiate a settlement in Indochina, the Secretary doubted the wisdom of our asking for the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the Korean political conference even if we could get the other parties to agree. Such agreement appeared most doubtful to the Secretary.

M. Bidault stated that he had underlined the difficulties involved in including Indochina in the Korean conference but he added that since peace is indivisible it seemed incongruous to make peace in Korea and not in Southeast Asia. He directed attention to the recent declarations of Reynaud favoring negotiations with the Chinese Communists and of Mendes-France which implied negotiations with Ho Chi Minh. M. Bidault recalled that his own position had been "negotiations if possible, victory if necessary". M. Bidault said that the French government would be in an absolutely impossible position if there were no prospects for peace in Indochina after a cease fire in Korea. He strongly reiterated the importance of exploring all means to bring peace to Indochina.

Secretary Dulles recalled that the war in Korea is being conducted under UN auspices and said that it was quite complicated to bring into a UN negotiation another war with which the UN had never concerned itself. He recalled that we had several times suggested that the Indochina situation be brought to the UN and treated as an act of concerted aggression but that the French Government had preferred not to do this.

M. Bidault rejoined that France had preferred not to bring Indochina before the UN because experience has shown, and the French are sure that this would be the case, that if Indochina were brought before the UN the case would degenerate into an attack on French policies in North Africa, Madagascar, etc. He said that France had no desire to be put into a position of a defendant before the UN.

M. Bidault said that he would remember what the Secretary had said regarding a warning to the Chinese Communists, including the substance of the March Communiqué and the President's speech, but he said that he regarded this as an insufficient minimum. He said that there was already taking place a transfer of capabilities from Korea to Indochina and he referred to the fact that Chinese aid to the Viet Minh has been running for the last three months at the rate of 10,000 tons per month. He also referred to the probability that the enemy in Indochina will have aviation support.

The Secretary said that the figures which M. Bidault had brought forward regarding Chinese aid were much greater than those which we had received. There is however agreement that aid is increasing. M. Bidault confirmed his figures.

The Secretary then said that if there is a political conference on Korea and if conditions at the time indicate that talks on Indochina would be fruitful, the Secretary would be glad to include that topic and would not refuse to do so on purely technical grounds, but he expressed the view that to insert the question now would involve a show of weakness and would not obtain the results which we all desire.

M. Bidault reiterated that French public opinion will demand that peace in Indochina be discussed. If it is not, the result will be to make insurmountable the difficulties with which the French Government is presently confronted. These difficulties are political as well as financial and economic.

The Secretary then asked M. Bidault whether the latter had given thought to what might be the basis for a negotiated peace in Indochina.

M. Bidault in turn asked whom the negotiation would be conducted with. He said that of course there could be no negotiation without agreement of the Associated States and of France's allies. He said that he did not want peace at any price. He pointed out that there are no frontiers involved. He suggested that perhaps a negotiated peace on the basis of free elections, perhaps under UN control, might be worth trying. M. Bidault said that he himself had prevented negotiations heretofore, but he stated that if there is a conference on Korea and if the scope of that conference cannot be stretched to include Indochina, might it not be possible to set up a special conference on Indochina with the support of our allies and of course including the Associated States?

The Secretary answered that there was no desire on the part of the United States to keep the war going on in Indochina except for the purpose of protecting interests vital to all concerned. He added that if a Korean conference takes place and the mood of those who are there indicates that a conference on Indochina would be a profitable affair, the United States would not oppose such a conference. The Secretary added however that the forthcoming Korean political conference would be dominated by Korean problems and personalities. Those present would include the representatives of both Koreas and of the UN. He did not think that it was practical to try to get these people to busy themselves with the Indochina problem.

The Secretary gave it as his opinion that a negotiation conducted under circumstances where our side would have no alternative, and would be "bankrupt" could only end in complete disaster. The Secretary said that if we can work out the Navarre plan and make progress demonstrating that we have the will and capability to sustain that plan, there might then be a prospect of success in negotiations.

M. Bidault stated energetically that he would never propose negotiations which would be equivalent to capitulation. Peace is something which must be worked at. The French Government does not plan to stab the expeditionary corps or the Associated States forces in the back. M. Bidault said that that is not what he is talking about at all. He added, however, that it would be easier to send troops to Indochina if the people in France see a possible end to the war, such as an end secured through negotiations at a conference. He added that negotiations of course should not be behind the back of the Associated States.

M. Bidault said that he thought the Chinese Communists and the Russians would now close up shop in Korea but that they would continue their Indochina enterprise, refusing any conference on Indochina because of their wish to leave this "colonial sore" running in the side of the West and thereby excite social hatred of the West. M. Bidault stressed the need of finding a way to do something about Indochina and asked that the question not be dropped. He said that what France wanted was a peace which would be fair to the fighters and to the whole world of free men. He added that there are on our side 532,000 men fighting in Indochina; we can't hand them over to the enemy or have them thrown into the sea.

The Secretary stated his thought that before we can get peace in Indochina, we must develop a capability to make the enemy shut up shop in Indochina too.

M. Bidault agreed to this concept. However, he contrasted the threat in sending 20,000 more men to Indochina, with the US capacity for atomic destruction of Manchuria. The problem is most difficult; it is one which we must keep to ourselves. M. Bidault said that he did not know whether the Navarre solution would be a sufficient one.

It was generally agreed that there would be no revelation to the Press or discussion with the Press on the aspect of the conversation dealing with negotiations.

396.1 WA/7-1353

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] July 13, 1953.

Participants: Lord Salisbury;[1]
Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador;
Secretary Dulles

Lord Salisbury and the British Ambassador called at my house Sunday evening[2] at 9:30 p. m. I reported to them the substance of the bilateral talks which had taken place with the French that afternoon.

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[1] The Marquess of Salisbury, Acting Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom.

[2] July 12.

Salisbury expressed the view that it would be impractical to include Indochina in the agenda of the Korean political conference, but that if the conference seemed to make it appropriate, a political talk about Indochina might grow out of the political conference with somewhat different membership. He indicated he believed that Thailand should be encouraged to seek from the UN the appointment of a peace observation commission. I expressed my agreement.

On Monday morning, July 13, Lord Salisbury advised me that he had had a private meeting with M. Bidault immediately prior to the above meeting which he had had with me.

751G.00/7–1353 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, July 13, 1953—6 p. m.
[Received 7 : 51 a. m.]

29. Repeated information Saigon 16, Paris 13. Train on Haiphong-Hanoi railway line blown up 0830 hours July 12 at point about 8 kilometers east of Haiduong with loss of at least ten lives and several dozen wounded. Casualties principally among North African military replacements newly arrived on ship *Pasteur*. Damaged train was second to pass over line that morning. Three explosive charges of type detonated by electric plunger were planted on rail line; one was detected, one failed explode; all damage done by third charge which went off under passenger cars, of which eight were hit. Line restored to usable condition within 14 hours.

Prior April of this year, there had been no sabotage of railway for about 15 months. In April there were two attempts resulting in little damage. Another attack on May 13 more serious in that it wrecked one locomotive. Another act of sabotage committed on June 11 caused serious damage to 30 cars. May, June and July attacks all involved triple, electrically detonated charges such as had not previously been used for this purpose.

Yesterdays attack seems to have been directed specifically against troop reinforcements and marks a new refinement in this type of Viet Minh activity.[1]

STURM

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[1] In telegram 49 from Hanoi, July 21, Sturm reported that the highway between Hanoi and Haiphong had been mined for the first time since 1948, and that a number of railway repair workers had been arrested as Viet Minh saboteurs. (751G.00/7–2153) He further reported in telegram 69 of July 31, that a transport plane had been blown up at the airport at Hanoi. He concluded that "pattern of sabotage has now been extended to include all forms of communication in Tonkin." (751G.00/7–3153)

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 158

United States Minutes of the Third Tripartite Meeting, Washington, July 13, 1953, 10:30 a.m.[1]

SECRET

ST MIN 3 (Draft)

PARTICIPANTS

United States:

Secretary Dulles
Ambassador Dillon
Ambassador Aldrich
Mr. Matthews
Mr. Merchant
Mr. MacArthur
Mr. Bowie
Mr. Phillips [2]
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Bonsal
Mr. Knight
Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Kitchen [3]
Mr. McBride
Mr. Trulock
Mr. Nash
Col. Black
Mutual Security Director Stassen
Mr. Matteson [4]

French:

Foreign Minister Bidault
Ambassador Bonnet
M. de Margerie
M. Falaize
M. Francois Seydoux [5]
M. Daridan
M. Roger Seydoux
M. de Juniac [6]
M. Roux
Col. de Brebisson
M. Vimont [7]
M. Sauvagnargues
M. Martin [8]
M. Carraud
M. Andronikov

United Kingdom:

Lord Salisbury
Ambassador Makins
Sir Frank Roberts
Mr. Allen [9]
Mr. Gore-Booth [10]
Mr. Tomlinson
Mr. Watson [11]
Mr. Leishman [12]
Mr. Porter [13]
Mr. MacGinnis
Mr. Marshell

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[1] The source text indicates that these minutes were prepared by Walter N. Trulock of the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State. The minutes were circulated to U.S. officials on July 15 as document ST MIN 3 (Draft) without having been cleared or approved. For an additional portion of the minutes describing discussion of European questions, see volume v. The meeting was summarized in telegram 158 to Paris, July 14 (also sent to London, Saigon, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Taipei, Pusan, and New York), not printed. (396.1 WA/7-1453)

[2] Joseph B. Phillips, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

[3] Jeffrey C. Kitchen, Deputy Director of the Executive Secretariat, Department of State.

[4] Robert E. Matteson, Assistant Director for Research, Statistics, and Reports, Mutual Security Agency.

[5] Chief of the European section of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[6] Gontran Begoügne de Juniac, Minister, French Embassy.

[7] Jacques Vimont, Co-Director of the Cabinet of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[8] Jacques Martin, First Secretary, French Embassy.

[9] W. D. Allen, Head of the Central Department, British Foreign Office.

[10] P. H. Gore-Booth, Public Relations Counselor, British Embassy.

[11] J. H. A. Watson, First Secretary, British Embassy.

[12] F. J. Leishman, Private Secretary to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

[13] I. F. Porter, First Secretary, British Embassy.

[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

Indochina

M. Bidault warned that "peace in Korea might mean war in Indochina". He referred to Indochina as the wound in the side of Southeast Asia and suggested that the three Ministers should probe all possible means of improving the situation in the essential area of Southeast Asia. He said that he had nothing specific to propose at the moment but simply wished the other Ministers to reflect on this problem. He added that he might have more to say on this subject later.

M. Bidault pointed out that his concern with Indochina did not grow out of a French desire to pull out, but because the French desired to liquidate the war with honor. He urged that the Ministers not neglect the possibility of preventing in Indochina the loss of "the good that might come elsewhere".

The Secretary said that he had listened attentively to M. Bidault's remarks, especially his inference that Indochina might be discussed in any political conference following a Korean armistice. He pointed out that the UN had never taken any part in Indochina nor had it been invited to do so. He agreed that no opportunity should be thrown away to explore ways to extend the areas of peace in the world. He said that to attempt to agree that Indochina should be on the agenda of the post-armistice political conference would raise many difficulties.

Lord Salisbury said that the point raised by M. Bidault was most important, but very complicated. He said that Indochina had never been before the UN and that it was his understanding that the French had not wanted this. He said that since the political conference was a matter of UN concern and would be called on an *ad hoc* basis to deal with Korea, it would not be appropriate to put Indochina on the agenda. However, if Korea was dealt with satisfactorily in the conference and if it were found that a favorable atmosphere existed, then we should keep an open mind about other matters to be explored. The policies of the Soviet Government and its satellites are unclear at the moment, but it might be that they will wish to liquidate all of their wars.

M. Bidault agreed with the U.S. and the U.K. that procedural difficulties existed, but pointed out that procedure was not always a factor uppermost in the public mind. He added that he had not stated that the conference should deal with Indochina but only that the Indochina situation should be dealt with. He was not very optimistic about the atmosphere in the political conference. Since Indochina is of great interest, not only to France, but also to the U.S. and the U.K., he might have some specific proposals to make to the two governments through normal diplomatic channels, provided a Korean armistice is achieved.

The Secretary asked M. Bidault if he wished to report further on Indochina, particularly with respect to the recent French notes to the Associated States.

M. Bidault said that the steps taken by the French had been welcomed by the Associated States, especially Laos and Viet Nam. He said there had been a less favorable reaction from Cambodia.

"What did we say? We said that independence, not something else, would be granted". He said that the Associated States would determine the nature of the negotiations, which would be conducted immediately and rapidly with all States. The negotiations will deal with political, economic and military matters as well as symbols which, M. Bidault said, are more important than at first glance. He referred to the problem of the rights of the Chinese population under existing Treaty arrangements. He said that military commands would be transferred under existing agreements. As for state officials, the French would keep only those requested by the Associated States, but he predicted that the Associated States may ask for more French officials rather than less. He referred to the new French Ambassador as a man well known to the U.S. and U.K. representatives, a man of great prestige and merit. He said that no one could believe that he would have a "pro-consular state of mind".

He said that many people wondered why the situation in Indochina had appeared to deteriorate, particularly by comparison with de Lattre's statements. He said that "the front is nowhere and the enemy is everywhere". While the enemy has no large quantities of heavy weapons, it was extremely difficult to conduct a war against people who appeared to be peasants by day and were soldiers by night. In Indochina, he said, there was always the "burglar-policemen" relationship, that is, the policemen must always wait for the burglar to make the move. He said that it was impossible to find large concentrations of the enemy against which military maneuvers could be conducted. The foe was extremely mobile and operated principally in small groups by night.

He referred to the new plan devised by the French Government which involved: (1) an acceleration of the U.S. of Associated States troops and (2) expansion of "means". He said that an expansion of means would involve increased expenditures and that, while France had received considerable aid from the U.S., the increased expenditures could not be carried out on the basis of the present level of aid.

He said that a new French plan envisaged gaining superiority over the Vietminh in quality and means, if not numerical superiority. He said that he had discussed the details of this program previously with both the Secretary and Lord Salisbury.

He asked that the action taken by the French with respect to the Associated States be recognized by the conference and referred to the final communiqué. He said that this would encourage his Government and the Associated States and call the attention of the world to this recent action. He added that the French delegation would table a suggested statement on this for inclusion in the communiqué.

Lord Salisbury said that his government was most interested in the steps being taken by the French toward the Associated States. He said that M. Bidault had referred to them as independent and sovereign states and he wondered if they would be analogous to members of the British Commonwealth. With respect to the military situation, he said that the British experience in Malaya made it easy for them to understand and appreciate the French difficulties in Indochina. He referred to the new French military program and asked if it were true that the French Government was prepared to initiate new measures at considerable sacrifice in Indochina. He asked this not from idle curiosity or because of the British interest in Southeast Asia, but with reference to M. Bidault's earlier remarks regarding negotiations. He stressed that if the French Government were considering negotiation, they should negotiate from strength. If the French negotiated from weakness, it would do far more harm than good.

M. Bidault said that the situation in Indochina was not deteriorating in any deep or inevitable way. He stressed that the French were holding the vital points and areas. He pointed out that there was the question of whether it was advisable to decrease strength in Europe in order to increase strength in Asia, and he touched briefly on the problem of sending conscripts to fight 12,000 kilometers from home.

In answer to Lord Salisbury's question, he said that the relation of each member of the French Union is determined by "statutes" agreed between states concerned. He referred to the chapter on the French Union in the text of the French Constitution.

Lord Salisbury hoped that it would be possible to return to Far Eastern questions later in the conference.

The Secretary suggested that each delegation nominate a member to work on the Far Eastern section of the communiqué. He designated Mr. Johnson for the U.S.; Lord Salisbury named Mr. Tomlinson; and the French named M. Roux.

[Here follows discussion of other subjects.]

751G.00/7–1353 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, July 13, 1953—12:30 p. m.

84. From Bonsal. While in Paris saw Navarre, Letourneau, Reynaud, Jacquet,[2] Cheysson, DeMargerie, Tezenas du Montcel, Offroy. Most of what they told me already reported by Embassy.

Navarre continuing effort obtain equivalent about fifteen new battalions from French Union promptly. Recognizes technical and other difficulties involved but continues hopeful. Reynaud and DeMargerie pessimistic as to giving further troops. Reynaud referred recent Ridgway report regarding weakness Western Europe defense as further argument against meeting Navarre's request.

Reynaud and Jacquet most emphatic regarding parliamentary and public opinion pressure in direction early and substantial alleviation Indochina drain.

Letourneau expressed great concern rapid deterioration French parliamentary and public support for continuation effort in Indochina. Said only "solid" element current cabinet is Bidault. Deplored tendency replace men with knowledge Indochina and of specific consequences French actions there with men unfamiliar with situation. Expressed contempt for Reynaud's understanding of Indochina. Added Faure and Mitterand[3] both favor soft solution—which in Letourneau's view would eventually result destruction Vietnamese who have favored present Franco-Vietnamese effort. Letourneau said increase French Union troops this time might have adverse political results in Associated States.

Interesting to note while Reynaud favored July 3 statement Bidault reported have thought it went too far. Reynaud believes French cannot continue much longer bear present burden Indochina. Bidault probably understands how vitally French interests elsewhere in world would be affected by disastrous or dishonorable end to seven years sacrifices in Indochina. Is it farfetched to speculate Reynaud in opening way for extremely broad renegotiation relations between France and Associated States, may expect latter will make such extreme demands as to throw into doubt far as French public opinion concerned Vietnamese concept of French Union as representing recognized mutuality of interests. Those in France who wish abandon Indochina effort would be greatly strengthened such development. (Navarre has strong views regarding minimum rights France should retain if French expected continue fight this war. Envisages economic preferences and military bases.) When time comes we may wish discreetly use our influence see positions taken by Vietnamese do not contribute to further weakening French will continue fight and when peace restored, continue help develop and protect Vietnam. May we have your views. Since no opportunity doing so myself asked Tezenas du Montcel see Reynaud and Jacquet briefed on background and status of plans for Tam visit.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Repeated to Paris as telegram 138.

[2] Marc Jacquet, Secretary of State for the Associated States. The Ministry for the Associated States was abolished on July 8. Jacquet reported directly to Premier Laniel.

[3] François Mitterand, member of the National Assembly; President of the Democratic and Socialist Union of Resistance.

DULLES

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 158

United States Minutes of a Meeting of Representatives of the United States, France, and the Associated States of Indochina, at the Department of State, July 13, 1953, 2:45 p.m.[1]

SECRET

STFA MIN 1

PARTICIPANTS

United States:
The Secretary of State
Mr. Bonsal
Mr. Kitchen
Mr. Hoey
Mr. McBride
Mr. Matteson
Col. Black

Viet Nam:
Miss Nguyen de-Nguyen-xuan-Dung[2]

Cambodia:
Ambassador Nong Kimny
H.R.H. Kantol Norodom

France:
Foreign Minister Bidault
Ambassador Bonnet
M. Louis Falaize
M. Roger Seydoux
M. Jacques Roux
Colonel de Brebisson
M. Jacques Vimont
M. Jacques Martin
M. Pierre Carraud
M. Pierre Pelletier
M. Constantin Andronikov

Laos:
Ourot Souvannavong
Inpeng Suryadhay

Foreign Minister Bidault opened with a welcome to the representatives of the Associated States and said he wished to repeat the assurances which had already been given to them regarding the full independence of their countries within the framework of ("au sein de") the French Union. He said that an outstanding career diplomat who was also an expert on Far Eastern questions and noted for his liberal spirit had been appointed as High Commissioner in Indochina. He added there should be no delay in getting the talks underway, and that the three Associated States are free to indicate exactly what they want in the economic, financial, administrative, judicial, and even military fields. He noted that no French civil servants would remain in any of the Associated States unless requested to remain by one of the States.

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[1] These minutes were circulated to U.S. officials as document STFA MIN 1 on July 16. The meeting was summarized in telegram 153 to Paris, July 14 (repeated for information to Saigon, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, and London), not printed. (396.1 WA/7–1453)

[2] Vietnamese Chargé in the United States.

He declared that the French Union and Associated States troops now fighting in Indochina form the principal effective barrier to Communism in Southeast Asia already, and that efforts would certainly be made to raise additional French Union forces. He stressed that the *entente* among the four nations must be harmonious and they must also work closely with the US which has furnished such important military and moral assistance. M. Bidault stated that the French desire is for the full independence of the three States, and that the purpose of the July 3 statement was to remove the uncertainty which apparently existed in some minds as to French policy.

Secretary Dulles, after welcoming the Associated States representatives, said that the future of these three countries was symbolic in the world today. He stated that occasionally the three powers at this conference—the US, UK and France—had been accused of not being interested in promoting independence in the world. He said that no charge was so false and misleading, and cited the record of the past ten years during which political independence has been given by these three powers to former colonial and dependent areas, comprising about 600,000,000 people, and representing nearly 25 percent of the population of the world. He said these former dependent territories now formed nearly a score of free states, and stressed that all of this had occurred as a result of voluntary action by these three powers. He also mentioned that the history of all three had long been characterized by the belief in the rights of man and human dignity. All three also believed in the natural evolution of peoples in a non-self-governing status towards independence.

Secretary Dulles said that the impediment to independence today had nothing to do with the desires of the US, UK or France, but rather that the great danger in the world today to small weak states, relatively inexperienced in self-government, was the aggressive policy of the Soviet Union. He noted Stalin had stated that nationalism is a slogan which is to be used to break up the unity of the free world, and to obtain independence for various areas which the Soviet Union would then try to absorb into its own orbit, where no freedom exists. The Secretary remarked that the Soviets have already grabbed almost twenty states and now control 800,000,000 people.

The problem is not one of theoretical independence, Secretary Dulles added, since the three governments represented at the conference have already made clear their position on this matter, but rather how much independence can be granted that won't immediately be snatched away by the Communists. It was as a result of this situation, the Secretary noted, that a collective security policy had been started. Today no one country, even one of the so-called Big Three, is safe. Secretary Dulles noted that this was the doctrine he had preached to Congress, i.e. that it was not safe to stand alone, even for the US. He continued that this conclusion would apply even more to the Associated States.

Continuing, Secretary Dulles said no condition in the world was so dangerous today as to be totally independent. We must have associations and the responsibilities that such a cooperative effort entailed. Certainly he favored a high degree of autonomy but coupled with ties that bind and give strength. He said the evolution of such an arrangement, as in the case of the British Commonwealth or the French Union, was one of the signs of the genius of free peoples. He said that independence must be coupled with inter-dependence.

In closing Secretary Dulles expressed a high appreciation of the recent French proposal, which he regarded as essential. He said the peoples of the Associated States must have as much independence as possible to give them something to fight for. They should manage all the essentials of their own affairs, and accordingly we applauded most strongly the French effort which was made with great sincerity. He urged the Associated States and France to work out their destiny, giving independence to the three States and assuring sufficient cooperation among the four to preserve that independence.

The Cambodian Ambassador, after thanking Secretary Dulles for the invitation to attend the conference, said he was glad the French have invited the Associated States to negotiate. He noted the danger of Communism to independence, and Secretary Dulles' statement that the three powers represented at the conference have always done their duty in the world and given independence freely to other states.

The Ambassador remarked that Franco-Cambodian relations had just passed through a rather bad phase, and expressed appreciation that the French Government, even though it has just been installed, had already attempted to solve the problem. French policy has certainly taken a step forward in the July 3 declaration which sought a solution agreeable to Cambodia. The Ambassador said he had been authorized by his Government to say that the Cambodian situation was a special one, and that, while France had stated the existing accords should form the basis for negotiations, this suggestion does not respond to the wishes of the Cambodian people. He added that a note had been delivered on July 12 to the French High Commissioner in

Phnom Penh giving the details as to how the Cambodian Government wished to conduct the talks. He said the details were secret but that in general what was required was an unequivocal declaration of independence by France and by Cambodia. Subsequently he said special concessions would be given to France.

The Ambassador stressed that the Communist danger was real and visible, and that Cambodia had never sought the French departure from Cambodia nor to leave the French Union. He said Cambodia had accepted French aid and was grateful to France for sacrificing the flower of her army and billions of francs in Indochina. He said his country had been devastated by seven years of war, and of course welcomed any initiative to end that war. He said Cambodia's demand for full independence is primarily for the purpose of giving the people a reason and desire to fight Communism and thus to show the enemy the Cambodian determination to pursue the struggle. He continued that the King of Cambodia himself had been active in the campaign against Communism, and that the Viet-Minh had caused too much ruin in Cambodia not to be hated. He said Communism is the negation of the monarchy, religion and society of his country. Accordingly, the King of Cambodia had wished to mobilize the country fully to fight with the French against Communism. He concluded, indicating he thought a solution to the problems of his country was possible.

The Chargé d'Affaires of Vietnam thanked Secretary Dulles for his invitation, and stated that she had not had time to get a message from her Government for the conference, but wished to express gratitude for the military and moral aid of both the US and France to her country. She said that the French declaration of July 3 would assist in resolving the troubles in her country and in meeting its needs. She concluded stating she felt it was important to begin negotiations as soon as possible since they represented a vital step forward in the cause of independence and peace. The whole country of Vietnam was anxiously awaiting the results of these meetings, she said.

The Minister of Laos said that the Secretary's advice regarding independence versus inter-dependence would be hard not to follow. He also said that it was important to give the Laotian people a feeling they were fighting for a cause, and he noted that his country had just given proof of its determination to fight. He thanked the US for aid given to his country and stated that since the war France had substituted friendship for colonialism. The Minister expressed thanks to France for the July 3 declaration, which he indicated was a proof that France was carrying out her promises. He said his Government greeted with satisfaction the declaration, and the King and most of the principal Laotian Ministers were already in France where they would hold a cabinet meeting after which a note would be sent to the French Government, and the Laotian officials would be ready to begin the talks.

The Laotian Minister agreed that independence cannot be absolute today and that his country desired inter-dependence and was content with the steps which France had already taken. In conclusion he said that the important problem for his country was to consolidate the steps which had been taken and those which were about to take place.

In closing the meeting, Secretary Dulles said that he felt it was fortunate that the US happened to be host at this conference so that we could participate in this meeting with the representatives of the other four states. He said he considered the negotiations which were about to take place as an historic event. He noted that we are only indirectly concerned of course but that these talks carry the hopes of millions of Americans, and we are sure that the negotiations will result in strengthening the citadel of freedom.

Conference files, lot 59 D 95, CF 157

Final Communiqué of the Washington Tripartite Foreign Ministers Meeting, July 10–14, 1953[1]

[Extract]

WASHINGTON, July 14, 1953.

. . . .

The Foreign Ministers were of the opinion that an armistice in Korea must not result in jeopardizing the restoration or the safeguarding of peace in any other part of Asia. They hope that any armistice accepted by the United Nations would be a step forward in the cause of peace everywhere, and in particular in the Far East.

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[1] The final communiqué of the conference was released by the Department of State as Press Release No. 379 of July 14. For full text, see volume v, or Department of State *Bulletin*, July 27, 1953, pp. 104–106. The final communiqué, including the section on Far Eastern questions, was discussed by Secretary Dulles, Foreign Minister Bidault, and Lord Salisbury at the 4th and 5th tripartite sessions, July 13 and 14. At the 5th session, July 14, Bidault also circulated a memorandum which he described as containing "reflections" on Indochina. He stated that it was not a formal document and did not require immediate replies from the United States and the United Kingdom. The memorandum emphasized the interrelationship between the Korean War and the conflict in Indochina, and stressed the necessity for negotiations between the Western Powers and Communist China with regard to Indochina, possibly in the context of a political conference on Korea. The French memorandum accompanies the U.S. minutes of the 5th Meeting as Annex II. For partial texts of the U.S. minutes of the 4th and 5th tripartite meetings, see volume v. The complete minutes and the French memorandum of July 14, not printed, are in Conference files, lot 59 D 95. CF 158.

On July 17, Secretary Dulles reported to the nation on the Foreign Ministers meeting in an address delivered over national radio and television. His remarks, which included reference to the Indochina discussions, were disseminated in Press Release No. 387 of July 17; for text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, July 27, 1953, pp. 99–103. For extracts from Press Release No. 387, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 105–106.

The current situation in Indochina was examined. The three Foreign Ministers paid tribute once again to the heroic efforts and sacrifices of the soldiers of the French Union, be they from France, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos or other parts of the Union. They agreed that the struggle in defense of the independence of these three nations against aggressive Communism is essential to the Free World, and they exchanged views on various measures to hasten a satisfactory outcome and the restoration of peace in Indochina.

The Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom and the United States noted with great satisfaction the proposal of the French Government to open discussions with each of the Governments of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam with a view toward completing their sovereignty and independence. They agreed that this initiative was a most important and auspicious step toward perfecting a free association of these four nations, since the internal security and stability of the Associated States are best safeguarded by freely established constitutional regimes.

They noted that the French Union offers a harmonious and flexible framework within which the mutual interest of the participants may be guaranteed and their individual interests reconciled. They are convinced that the objective of the French Government is to perfect with the Associated States that mutually desirable cohesion which is indispensable to the success of the common struggle for the independence of the three states and which is therefore of fundamental importance to the security of the whole of Southeast Asia.

751G.00/7-1553: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, July 15, 1953—7 p. m.

91. Repeated Paris 31, Phnom Penh unnumbered, Hanoi unnumbered. Deptel 84, July 13 very helpful this Embassy in understanding situation. I thoroughly agree that when time comes we may wish discreetly to employ our influence to see that the Vietnamese do not take positions which will contribute to further weakening the French will to continue the fight and, when peace is restored, to protect Vietnam. In fact I think the time has now come to exert such influence not [only] vis-à-vis Vietnamese Government but also vis-à-vis the Cambodian Government.

Perhaps the most constructive position which we can take is to convince the Vietnamese and Cambodians that in their vital self-interest they must take realistic view that they may have to make promptly certain concessions in substance or form in order to insure continuance of French effort in their behalf. We must also make it clear to them that they cannot expect the US to take on those responsibilities now borne by France. On the other hand, our influence must be exerted to keep the French from haggling over details. The French have made a broad generous offer. I fear, though, that in actual negotiations which in part will be conducted or prepared by French civil and military officials, spirit of petty bargaining may unfortunately come to the fore.

I hope to see Penn Nouth in next day or two and possibly arising from this talk, the King may wish to receive me. I will be in touch with Tam and hope to see Bao Dai in a few days. May I have Department's instructions soonest?

Heath

751G.00/7–1653: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, July 16, 1953—4 p. m.

201. Repeated information Saigon 27. Deptel 138, July 13 (Saigon 84).[1] While we agree that Reynaud position goes farther in direction of seeking solution in Indochina through ending conflict than does Bidault, we do not believe that his major role in recent French policy decision was based on expectation that by paving way to broad revision Franco-Associated States basic accords he would give latter opportunity make such extreme demands that French public opinion would doubt continued mutuality of interests. Cambodian King had already, by his statements and actions prior to recent French policy statement, made extreme demands and his reply to French note July 3 may be equally extreme, but it hardly seems likely that a less liberal French policy decision re Franco-Cambodian relations would have reduced his intransigence. On the contrary, a harder policy might have blown lid off, if only because King had gone so far there was no turning back. Regardless of Reynaud's views re ultimate solution Indochina conflict, we see no reason to doubt that he endeavored obtain French

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[1] *Ante*, p. 673.

policy decision which would obtain maximum possible political benefit at this time both for France and Associated States Governments with consequent strengthening of political position of each in Indochina. Increased questioning by French public and parliamentary opinion as to value continuation Indochina effort was, we believe, both factor in decision to make broad concessions and likely to be increased by it.

DILLON

751G.5/7-1653 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, July 16, 1953—6 p. m.

206. Repeated information Saigon 28. In discussing Indochina with Adlai Stevenson [1] today Pleven and Laniel spoke along lines of Embtel 106 July 8, and both termed it France's most serious present problem.

Pleven was confident Navarre's modest demand for additional air and sea resources would be met but he himself would oppose request for 15 additional French battalions. These could come only from conscripts which would entail passage of legislation. There would be no possibility of majority for it in Assembly; on contrary in present temper of Assembly such a proposal by government would not only be defeated but might well produce some sort of directive to government to withdraw at practically any price.

He also felt 15 more French battalions was not the answer even if available. War could only be won if enough Vietnamese were willing to die in process and could be trained as really effective jungle fighters. Unfortunately most of best and most fanatical Viet fighters were still on side of Viet Minh and green Vietnam troops recently engaged had come off badly and with unpleasantly high losses of their equipment. Laniel also spoke with concern of this tendency.

Pleven agreed readily with Stevenson's criticism that recent offer of independence should have been made years ago and that symbols of French sovereignty and colonial-minded officials removed long ago. He felt that progress in this direction was now being made with considerable speed but admitted that in the past obstructionism by local officials had made progress slower than Paris had believed to be case.

DILLON

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[1] Governor Stevenson was on visit in France.

751G.00/7-1553: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET NIACT WASHINGTON, July 17, 1953—10:19 a. m.

110. Saigon's 91, rptd Paris 31.[2] For your information Bidault in course bipartite meeting with Secretary asked whether US (and British) could be of assistance Cambodian situation by telling King that general interest Cambodia and free world best served by independence within French Union perfected through procedure indicated by French July third declaration. Bidault referred to possibility King may believe his anti-communist stand will get him help from countries other than France under present circumstances.

Department pleased note you may be talking Penn Nouth and King shortly. Following points may in your discretion be made orally:

(1) We are approaching period when heavy fighting will be resumed and when enemy in Tonkin and Laos particularly may be expected attempt resume offensive. Cause defended by French Union, Vietnamese and Laotian troops which will be engaged in meeting enemy also that of Cambodia. Is it not reasonable expect Cambodian contribution general solidarity and unity of purpose under grave existing circumstances?

(2) US Govt believes and has so stated that French Govt declaration July third represents most important step forward and provides opportunity for placing relationships Associated States with France on basis consistent both with legitimate aspirations those states and with mutuality interest with France (see Far East communiqué and telegrams reporting remarks Bidault and Secretary this subject.)

(3) It is hoped, on basis Cambodian Government truly recognizes as King has often stated that there is mutuality of interest, Cambodians will not set up insurmountable obstacles of purely procedural nature. For example: demand that French as condition precedent to Cambodia's entrance into French Union grant Cambodia complete independence. Such step may well be beyond early capacity French Government whose control over French constitution is inferior to that which King has demonstrated he possesses over Cambodian constitution.

(4) Present French contribution to defense and development Cambodia is not only vital; it is also irreplaceable, so far as Department aware, from elsewhere in free world.

Department recognizes difficulty making above points sympathetically, tactfully and effectively in present superheated Cambodian atmosphere but has confidence your skill and sense of timing. Let us have your comments and plans as well as extent you deem advisable coordinate with French locally. We will back you up with Cambodian Ambassador here.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA. Repeated for information to Paris as 199 and Saigon (to be passed to Phnom Penh by pouch).

[2] Dated July 15, p. 679.

State–JCS Meetings, lot 61 D 417

Substance of Discussions of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at the Pentagon Building, July 17, 1953, 11 a. m.[1]

TOP SECRET

PRESENT

General O'Daniel
General Bradley
General Collins
General Ridgway[2]
Admiral Fechteler
General Twining[3]
Admiral Radford[4]
General Shepherd
General Eddleman
General White
Admiral Gardner
General Lemnitzer
Admiral Conolly[5]
General Everest
General Partridge
Colonel Carns
Captain Phillips

Mr. H. Freeman Matthews
Mr. Walter S. Robertson
Mr. U. A. Johnson
Mr. Jacob Beam
Mr. Philip Bonsal
Mr. James Bonbright
Mr. Charles C. Stelle

NSC

General Gerhart
Mr. S. Everett Gleason

Report by General O'Daniel[6]

(O'Daniel began his presentation by reading the terms of reference of the O'Daniel Mission.)

General O'Daniel: On the 8th of June we were briefed by officers from the State Department and here in the Pentagon. We assembled at my headquarters in Honolulu and left for Saigon on the 18th of June, arriving in Saigon on the 20th. We called on Ambassador Heath and then made a series of calls and held discussions with a number of French and Vietnamese leaders. We talked with Prime Minister Tam and I was much impressed with his forthrightness and honesty. Tam is a naturalized French citizen but he seems to be a sincere Vietnamese Nationalist. We talked with Defense Minister Quat, who seems like a first-rate man. We had, of course, many talks with Navarre. Navarre seems to be thoroughly respected by the Vietnamese and the French as well as by our own people. He was a Division Commander in World War II and I think he has sound and aggressive ideas. We talked with General Hinh who is a capable young fellow and who, incidentally, is the son of Premier Tam and also like Tam a naturalized French citizen. We talked with Bao Dai and a considerable number of military and civilian leaders. In general the war in Indochina is a political as well as military war. There is a large number of Third Force people who right now are against both the French and the Vietnamese [*Viet Minh*]. If the Associated States were granted full independence it is our feeling that these fence sitters would be in favor of the Associated States and against the Communists. French military organization so far is for defense only.

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[1] This State Department draft was not cleared with the participants.

[2] Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, U.S. Army, relinquished command as Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, on July 11, 1953; he took office as Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, on Aug. 15, 1953.

[3] Gen. Nathan F. Twining, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force since June 30, 1953.

[4] Adm. Arthur W. Radford relinquished command as Commander in Chief, Pacific, and U.S. Pacific Fleet, on July 10, 1953; he became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Aug. 15, 1953.

[5] Vice Adm. Richard L. Conolly, President of the Naval War College.

[6] See footnote 1, p. 616.

The territories are divided up into defense areas with each area commander in command of a certain number of battalions. If there are operations in any area, battalions are assigned to the commander of that area for his control. In some areas there are dependents of the armed forces living in compounds right near the military units, so obviously those units are not too much good for offensive operations. When Navarre gave us our initial briefing, he presented what in fact was a rehash of the LeTourneau–Allard Plan. The plan, as you know, calls for no operation to be undertaken until September 15, at which time operations would start in an attempt to clear the Central and Southern Annam. After these operations the plan called for regrouping forces and undertaking in 1954 and 1955 attacks in the Delta in the North. All through these initial briefings the French repeatedly described the situation as difficult. I think the word difficult was used 50 or 100 times in their initial briefings. I finally made it a rule in my group that anybody that even spoke the word difficult would be fined a dollar and I think by the end of the visit we were out of the habit of using it. After the French had completed their briefings they asked us if we had any questions. We came right out frankly with our questions on their plan. We pointed out that the French had plenty of amphibious equipment and that during the rainy season the rice paddies were 5 or 6 feet deep in water and that the area was so flooded that the enemy had to concentrate in villages. We pointed out we thought under these conditions the French had at their disposal considerable mobility whereas the enemy was tied down. We thought that the French could do a lot immediately during the rainy season this summer and that if they went ahead with action this summer they should be in a position to attack in the Delta this autumn. Later we put our ideas down in writing and gave them to Navarre.

The French had originally planned to give us 5 days of briefings but after our first day of briefing we told them we wanted to get out for a look-see right away. We broke up into three groups. I had been through the Delta positions when I was last out in Indochina so I spent my time looking into various types of training facilities which they have set up throughout Indochina. The two other groups covered the military positions and the establishments of the various services throughout Indochina. When we had surveyed the situation pretty thoroughly we went back to Saigon to talk with Navarre. We had sent Navarre a paper[7] which included the ideas on what it was possible to do so that he had had a chance to go over it.

(At this point General O'Daniel passed out photographs taken on his mission and showed some movies which had been taken by a member of the mission.)

I had a two and one-half hour conference with Navarre. I first told him that he could call together enough forces to organize 7 divisions and that he could use 5 of these to break out of the Delta positions and 2 to block on the southwestern flank. Navarre said that it was just impossible to get 7 divisions together from forces which were already there. He finally said he could get together 3 divisions. I finally agreed with Navarre that it would be important to try and get 2 divisions of troops from France which would of course have to come out of NATO.

We had prepared other studies which I gave to Navarre. One of these was on recommendations for reorganization of forces and one on recommendations for the reorganization of training schools. Both the forces and the schools suffer from a lack of coordination at the top. Area commanders and school commanders are given their instructions and then they are almost completely on their own. For example, Trapnell visited one company which had not seen its battalion commander for 6 months. We made our ideas on organization available to Navarre.

We also agreed with Navarre that there should be a French MAAG and that we should have 3 U.S. officers attached to it. Our thought was that through this device we would be in a position to have an indirect influence on training.

Navarre, after our conference and before he left for France, handed me his plan entitled *Principles for Conduct of the War in Indochina*, which I summarized in a telegram back here.[8] (At this point O'Daniel read the telegram summarizing Navarre's plan which had been previously received in the Department.)

Our general estimate is that the Vietnamese can be developed into a first-rate fighting army. They have not been as yet really given an opportunity to develop leaders. Our thought is that if the French could organize them in divisions, the French could then have division advisers just as we do in Korea and the Vietnamese would have the chance to develop leadership experience. In general we think the training system which the French are using is pretty good—it does lack coordination at the top. I saw two bad training centers in which sanitary and other conditions were not adequate but there are also some well run training centers. Even though the French say that they don't like the methods which we are using in Korea, they have actually adopted some of our methods in Indochina. The schools don't make enough use of training aids and they don't make enough out of the equipment which they have.

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[7] The suggested plan submitted to General Navarre was included in the report of the O'Daniel Mission, July 15, as Annex G. (711.5851G/7-1553)

[8] Reference is to General O'Daniel's telegram of June 30, p. 624.

The Air Force has enough planes to carry out the mission which they have been assigned but is short in pilots and mechanics. The Air Force has a very poor system of maintenance and is too decentralized. The 10,000 personnel ceiling on the air force is too low.

We believe there is need to organize an amphibious corps. The French have plenty of landing craft which they can use but these landing craft are scattered all over Indochina. The Army and Navy both need reorganization in order to increase centralization and coordination at the top.

To sum up, we reached agreements with the French and Vietnamese that the French would attempt to recover a maximum number of units and to organize a striking force of at least three divisions and to undertake offensive operations in Tonkin in September. The French agreed also to undertake offensives this summer including raids on Langson, Thai-Nguyen, Yen Bay, and Hu Xhan; to undertake clearing operations at Tourane and to undertake breaking out operations from Phan Tiet.

The Langson operation was due to be undertaken July 16 and as you have read in the newspapers it went on on schedule.

(General O'Daniel then read the recommendations of his report and distributed copies of the report. The recommendations included sending qualified experts to assist in the development of local industry, particularly in developing the manufacture of small arms, batteries, and facilities for recapping tires; approval of increase in the artillery allotment and table of equipment; approval of the attachment of 3 U.S. officers to a French MAAG; approval of the attachment of 2 additional military attachés for work with the French on combat intelligence; approval of the return of O'Daniel to Indochina in 4 or 5 months time for a follow-up.)

General Ridgway: What is the quality of the French combat intelligence?

General O'Daniel: By and large it is pretty poor. They do not do enough patrolling to get adequate combat intelligence. They do get some intelligence—for example, one commander up in the forward area has made contacts with the villages around and almost on a personal basis, has secured pretty good intelligence on Vietnamese movements in his area. With no offensive impetus from the top, however, their combat intelligence is of a low order.

General Collins: Navarre has asked for 2 divisions from France. In view of the small likelihood that the French will be willing to send 2 divisions, how important is it to Navarre's success that he get these divisions from the outside.

General O'Daniel: This would be the only way that he would think that he could undertake an all-out attack this fall.

General Bradley: Could he undertake an attack with the troops that he has on hand?

General O'Daniel: He could if he would, but the French are afraid that if they take too many troops from their present garrisons they will be in trouble.

Admiral Radford: They are afraid to withdraw their garrison troops because of the political difficulties that they would run into in Cambodia and Laos.

General Collins: How about the troops that are in the Forts in the Delta. As I understand it there are something like 50 battalions tied up in those Delta Forts.

Admiral Radford: That is where Navarre is planning to get his three divisions from.

General O'Daniel: They do have to police the areas that they control. Combat troops are tied up by the Vietminh irregulars and the militia are not yet organized to free the combat troops from this duty.

General Collins: It is now the middle of July. Do you think Navarre can train and organize three divisions by September?

General O'Daniel: I think he can.

Mr. Bonsal: These units have already functioned as "groupes mobiles" so that they have experience in operating as units.

General Collins: They will need, however, training in divisional operations and I don't think they can get that in a hurry.

General Ridgway: As I understand it equipment is no problem and manpower is no problem. What is lacking is leadership, spirit, organization and intangibles. Is it true there is no specific logistic problem that requires our help?

General O'Daniel: With the exception of a possible increase in artillery, I think it is fair to say there is no logistic problem.

General Twining: How about the Air Force?

General O'Daniel: They have enough planes but they are short of mechanics and pilots.

Admiral Conolly: Is it fair to say the French have more capability than they have yet used?

General O'Daniel: Yes, I think that is a fair statement.

Admiral Conolly: Who is going to follow up on your mission to see that the French go ahead with the plans they have made?

General O'Daniel: I thought I would keep in touch with Navarre by letter and if the Chiefs are willing, can go out there later on to follow up.

General Collins: Why don't we use Trapnell to follow up. He is a first class soldier and he is there on the spot. It seems to me that that would be more efficient than trying to follow up from your headquarters in Honolulu.

General O'Daniel: That would be a good way of doing it, but Trapnell will need to have his mission broadened. (At this point Secretary Wilson joined the meeting.)

General Ridgway: Is it your estimate that there are major weaknesses in leadership and training on the part of the French?

General O'Daniel: Yes, I think that is right.

General Ridgway: Then I don't think we can say that the French plans are adequate because I don't think they are adequate in terms of strength and in terms of objective.

General Bradley: How about the effect of the political situation on the French plans?

General O'Daniel: The July 3d French statement was good as far as it went, but it does not seem to have gone far enough.

Mr. Wilson: These meetings that we have been having have been very encouraging on that score. I don't know whether the French are planning to make further statements here, but they have certainly told us that they are going to promise these people independence.

Mr. Matthews: It is my understanding that they are not going to make further statements here but that they are going to have meetings in France at which they will discuss new arrangements with the leaders of the three Associated States.

General Bradley: If Navarre does not get 2 divisions from France, what will be the effect on Navarre's Plan?

General O'Daniel: It will delay his plan for 6 months to a year.

General Collins: My impression is that we shouldn't go on the assumption that anything really important is going to be done in a short time. We can say that the French Plan looks good on paper but we can't really tell whether it will work until the French start doing something. So far the French really haven't given it a try. The first thing they have to do is to get the divisions organized.

General O'Daniel: I think this operation they have just pulled off is a demonstration that Navarre means what he says and I think Navarre is sincere that he is going to try and do something. (At this point the meeting was restricted to the regular attendants at the regular State–JCS Meetings to talk with Secretary Wilson and the Chiefs about Korea.)

[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

751G.00/7–2153 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, July 21, 1953—10 a. m.

47. Repeated information Saigon 27, Paris 22. I called on General Cogny yesterday to congratulate him on Langson raid.[1] He was in a jubilant mood and gave impression of being entirely satisfied with results obtained. Unfortunately it had not been possible bring home more than a token number of the 1,000 automatic rifles seized. The rest, representing type equipment in this army of two full divisions, had to be destroyed. If helicopters had been available, these weapons could have been brought back for distribution among under-armed paramilitary forces; however, since they were Skoda guns, ammunition supply would have presented problem. Two Molotova, 4 GMC trucks and 57 GMC truck motors were destroyed. Operation virtually completed by night of July 19 to 20. There was some indication that Viet-Minh division 308 was beginning to react day after attack began, but reaction was too slow to have effect.

Operation was planned without particular attention to security aspects. Cogny wrote good many of the orders in longhand. There were a few leaks, but none of significance; since there are so few places subject to raid of this sort, it was inevitable that certain persons seeing operation in build-up stage should guess objective. Navarre agreed to operation before his departure for France. Preparations were longer than Cogny wished, but troops and planes had to be rounded up and proper tides awaited for landing at Tien-Yen. Bastille Day made good excuse for gathering of forces.

In reply to question, Cogny said troops had special mission to liberate French Union prisoners of war if at all feasible. Prisoner camp, however, was found to be 20 kilometers from Langson, and under circumstances task force "could not afford luxury of going so far."

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[1] In telegram 41 from Hanoi, July 18, Sturm reported that French Union forces had launched a heavily-supported airborne assault against Viet Minh depots at Lang Son on the morning of July 17. (751G.00/7–1853) He further reported in telegram 45 of July 20, that the French booty had included 1,000 new Skoda automatic rifles. (751G.00/7–2053) Telegram 141 to Saigon, July 23 (repeated to Paris and Hanoi for information), read as follows: "Department officers most pleased and encouraged at reports of results Lang Son raid." (751G.00/7–2353)

Although proud of his feat, Cogny hopes its value will not be exaggerated. While its effect on morale has been dramatic, it has not changed the basic military picture, which remains sombre.

Cogny intends now to get on with pacification of south delta and hopes that he will not be hampered by General Hinh's ambition to take over not only from Cogny but from Governor Tri also.

STURM

751G.5/7–2153 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, July 21, 1953—12 : 48 p. m.
PRIORITY

237. *New York Times* story datelined Paris July 20 describes Foreign Office reaction to Schreiber story *Le Monde* regarding Secretary's meeting with Bidault July 12.[2] Penultimate sentence story follows:

"Officials said M. Bidault had merely asked Mr. Dulles to study the Navarre plan and that, far from excluding peace, the two discussed how a peace in Korea could be linked with one in Indochina."

Department understanding on basis conversations with Bidault (see our 180)[3] was that this aspect of question was not to be mentioned to press and in fact Department has given negative reply all press queries this matter. Suggest Roux and perhaps De Margerie be urgently reminded of agreement on this subject between Secretary and Bidault. It appears important to us Bidault's speech to Assembly tomorrow not refer this aspect.[4]

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA.

[2] The story under reference appeared in the *New York Times* of July 21. The *Le Monde* article upon which it commented is discussed in telegram 264 from Paris, *infra*. For the United States minutes of the meeting of July 12, see p. 656.

[3] Telegram 180 to Paris, July 15, describing the meeting of July 12, is not printed. (396.1 WA/7–1553).

[4] Ambassador Dillon responded in telegram 273 from Paris, July 22, which read as follows:

"We discussed subject reftel this morning with Roux, who said he would immediately bring matter to Bidault's attention. Bidault attending Council Ministers meeting this morning, where chief questions will be French reply to Cambodians and Navarre Plan, and is to make report this afternoon to National Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee on Washington talks. Roux said it would be impossible for Bidault to avoid telling committee that question of how peace in Korea could be linked with one in Indochina was discussed with Secretary since that is one of burning questions of day and queries inevitable but that committee meeting was executive session and Bidault could explain this was not to be made public. Roux explains statement in Foreign Office communiqué re connection between peace in Korea and Indochina as having been made necessary because of Servan-Schreibers claim that 'secret pact' had been concluded between Bidault and Secretary. Communiqué had to show that only exchange of views on this subject had taken place." (751G.5/7–2253)

751G.00/7-2153 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, July 21, 1953—6 p. m.

264. Repeated information Saigon 38. Embtel 256 (Saigon 37).[1] Servan-Schreiber article *Le Monde* believed to have been purposely timed to appear on eve inter-ministerial meeting this morning to consider Indochina problems, including Navarre plan. Governmental reaction, as shown in strong Foreign Office communiqué denouncing article, was immediate and we are reliably told this did not represent merely Foreign Office or Bidault reaction but came from Laniel.

We know that Servan-Schreiber learned last Friday [2] that Tam had been invited to visit United States. His source, CBS correspondent, David Schoenbrun, who in turn had obtained information from Buu Loc and had broadcast report this invitation July 18. Servan-Schreiber twisted this invitation and other aspects of current Indochina developments to produce picture under which France would be sharing power decision in Indochina with United States and Vietnam to degree that she should no longer be in position to control situation and would thus not be able to take "separated diplomatic initiative" (i.e., seek to negotiate) without running risk of being charged with breaking agreement. Purpose of article appears to have been to influence government decisions on Indochina at this critical period.

In this same general vein stories are making rounds that Lang Son offensive designed merely influence United States and non-Communist Leftist *Combat* this morning carries editorial to that effect criticizing operation as endangering French troops when "country should appeal to heroism its children only for national causes".

Le Monde article likely to find responsive audience only among neutralist or pro-negotiation-at-any-price elements and government's vigorous and immediate reply should offset damage article might otherwise have done. At same time it does not lessen malaise re Indochina which lends itself all too easily to emotional exploitation and tends play up any latent French suspicion re United States intentions Indochina. Announcement United States invitation to Tam just reported in Saigon AFP dispatch should be helpful in dispelling any misunderstanding United States role in this affair.

DILLON

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[1] Telegram 256 from Paris, July 20, not printed, contained highlights of an editorial on Indochina by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber which appeared in *Le Monde* on that day. (751G.00/7-2053)

[2] July 17.

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Hanoi Correspondence"

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)

[Extract]

SECRET OFFICIAL–INFORMAL HANOI, July 21, 1953.

DEAR PHIL:

. . . .

I was much struck by your telegram[1] reporting conversations in Paris. What you had to say of Reynaud reminds me that he was Premier at the outbreak of the war. How humiliating that we should have to contemplate getting down on our knees to ask the French to stay here, considering all the water that has flowed under the Pont Doumer! But on the other hand, if I may return to one of my old themes, there is no particular point in our paying the French to remain here if they will remain only on conditions which tend to preclude the attainment of our objectives. These I take to be the successful conclusion of the war and the establishment of a stable regime which, with help, may resist pressures from the North. It has been demonstrated that French Union forces alone cannot win the war: as their firepower has increased, so have the skill and equipment of the Vietminh grown. The balance must be turned by an enlistment of the whole-hearted support of the people on this side of the lines. As long as the people retain their doubts of the French, they will *not* fully cooperate, regardless of what we say. After all, they are not interested in *our* foreign policy objectives, except as the latter touch them.

I have detected in various of my Vietnamese friends (Quat, for example) a growing tendency to ask searching questions as to our policy toward Vietnam. It is getting harder and harder to give them satisfactory answers. The truth of course is that we want the French to stay here because we do not think we could undertake to replace them militarily. But to induce them to stay here, are we to refrain from urging them to adopt policies of liberalism which might gain the cooperation needed to win a victory? It strikes me that by following that course we stand not only an excellent chance of losing the war but also, before that unhappy day, of destroying the illusions regarding us that these people still cherish. I think it would be a crippling blow to our position in the Far East, and consequently to the cause we represent, if we became identified in any degree with the colonialist idea. (Parenthetically, I believe most non-Communist Vietnamese are fully prepared to grant the French trade preferences and military bases. What they will always resent are attempts to direct their internal policies and dictate the choice of persons to fill political positions.) How do we coat the pill you are asking us to administer to the Vietnamese? Remember that I in the North far more than the Embassy have to deal with the critical part of the population.

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[1] Reference is to telegram 84 to Saigon, July 13, p. 673.

. . . .

Sincerely yours, PAUL

751G.5/7-2253 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, July 22, 1953—8 p. m.

285. Repeated information Saigon 44. I invited Paul Reynaud to lunch today with Governor Stevenson. Reynaud came direct from a meeting of Council of Ministers on Indochina, and we had long and detailed discussion of Indochinese problems. Reynaud's views are:

1. Navarre stands very little or no chance of getting the twelve additional battalions he requested from France. These troops are needed in Europe for the defense of France and cannot be spared. As authority for the continuing military danger in Europe, Reynaud cited recent speeches by Ridgway and Gruenther.

2. Navarre will probably get a significant number of additional officers and non-coms who could be used to help train and form Vietnamese units.

3. The only key to success in Indochina is the creation of a strong Vietnamese army, and the development of a nationalistic spirit among Vietnamese military units. For this purpose, the fewer French troops in Indochina, the better. There should be a definite plan, publicly announced, for the withdrawal of French units from Indochina as soon as Vietnamese units are ready to take their place. Reynaud suggested that the withdrawal begin in 18 months and be at the rate of 20,000 men every two months thereafter.

4. Reynaud was very pessimistic re prospects in Indochina, because he said France simply did not have the financial means to put up any more money for the Indochina effort and, in fact, should be reducing its expenses in Indochina. Despite the NATO resolution of past December on Indochina, France was still carrying 60 percent of the financial cost and 100 percent of the manpower effort. This obviously was unfair. He particularly pointed out that France was, in effect, fighting to protect free world and, in particular, British sources of raw materials in Southeast Asia which Britain was apparently not interested in defending herself. When we commented that Britain was also fighting in Malaya, he pointed out that there were 5,000 Communist troops in Malaya compared to 400,000 Communist troops in Indochina, he

also stated that if a referendum were held in France today as to whether or not France should withdraw immediately and completely from Indochina, there would be a 90 percent vote in favor of immediate withdrawal.

5. Reynaud said that opinion in the French Cabinet was that Washington talks on Indochina had been a very disappointing failure as United States apparently did not consider Indochina of enough importance to put up the necessary funds to carry on. I pointed out clearly to him that we had never received a definite request for any specific amount of dollar help, and I said that I hoped that they would tell us what they needed before taking any unilateral action to cut back the expansion of the Vietnamese armed forces. Reynaud said that the expansion of the Vietnamese forces would require about 45 billion francs, and that additional French expenditures of 25 billion francs (or a total of 70 billion francs additional) were required by Navarre plan. France could under no circumstances put up any part of these additional funds. The decision of whether or not Indochina could be adequately protected had passed from French hands. It was for the other NATO countries to decide whether or not they had enough interest in Indochina to put up the required money.

Comment: We had previously heard from first hand reliable US source that Reynaud had said that US had rejected Bidault request for additional US aid for IC, which is in keeping with picture given in some sectors of French press that Bidault returned from Washington empty-handed. This may bear some relation to inner-political sparring within French political circles, although it is difficult to understand just why Reynaud should try to give such impression to me.

6. Reynaud inquired whether it would not be easier for US to make money available directly to Vietnam. Governor Stevenson replied that, in his opinion and for domestic political reasons, it would definitely be easier to obtain funds in this way from the US. This seemed to satisfy Reynaud.

Comment: In view previously very strong French aversion to having US deal direct with Vietnamese, Reynaud's statement is somewhat surprising. It may stem from his desire to proceed with transfer increasing powers and independence to Vietnamese, as well as from realization that extension direct US financial aid to Vietnam would establish more clearly US assumption of share of IC burden, which once assumed would with difficulty be shifted elsewhere.

7. Reynaud stated that he feared a renewed Viet Minh attack on Laos in the fall and asked me to ask Washington if it would be possible for US to state publicly that an invasion of Laos, a free country, would be a matter of concern to US and would cause a reaction by US. Governor Stevenson and I pointed out to Reynaud that an invasion

of Laos was really a UN problem, not just a US problem. He said he agreed, but that he feared the UN would merely debate the problem and never take action. What was needed was action, which could only come from a US declaration. He again asked me to inquire of my government as to possibilities of such a statement which I said I would do although I felt that it was very unlikely that we would make any such unilateral declaration.

Comment: Reynaud, while not favoring UN action, does not take strong stand against it. His views are thus completely contrary to those of Bidault. Reynaud is, in effect, by this suggestion moving into Bidault's field of foreign affairs, and we should handle this one gingerly. At any rate, it is somewhat strange that we should now be asked to make public statement in anticipation possible invasion Laos, when French Government has taken such strong stand against UN action in anticipation such an attack. It seems to me that our reply should be that this continues, in our view, to be problem for UN. Please advise how I should answer Reynaud.[1]

8. Reynaud said that when De Jean reached Saigon, he would promptly make a number of conciliatory moves, such as the return of the Norodom Palace to Vietnam. Reynaud also stated that Gautier would be replaced very shortly by a less colonial-minded individual.

Conclusions: I feel Indochina problem is rapidly reaching a crisis here. A definite understanding of what amount of extra aid we are prepared to put up is needed promptly. To be sufficient to carry out the basic elements of the Navarre plan, something like $200 million extra will be required. I suggest that we tell Reynaud that US is deeply concerned over situation in Indochina and, therefore, would be glad to receive him or his representative in Washington to discuss specific figures on aid for Indochina as soon as he is prepared to talk. I feel it would be much preferable if Reynaud should come himself. Department should realize that this may not be solely a question of money, but that what French may have in back of their minds is assumption by US of substantially larger share of Indochinese burden, possibly even including a share of the responsibility if things should not work out to our satisfaction in Indochina.

DILLON

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[1] Telegram 306 to Paris, July 27, read as follows:

"Reference paragraph 7 Embtel 285, you should inform Reynaud we do not see our way clear make unilateral statement re possible future invasion Laos. You may further inform him that if France could alter her opposition UN consideration Laotian problem, US would explore with other UN members idea of obtaining resolution by UNGA along lines French desire, noting existence of threat to Laos and stating any action of aggression against it would be 'matter of concern'. We remain convinced such UN pronouncement would have greater weight than unilateral statement any single member." (751G.5/7-2253)

751G.5/7–2453 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, July 24, 1953—7 p. m.

163. Repeated information Paris 51. Re Paris telegram to Department 285 July 22.[1] We have the following comment on Paris telegram 285 to Department of July 22.

Paragraph 1: I hope that every channel of influence that we can bring to bear on France will be employed to back up Navarre's request for twelve additional French battalions for Indochina. It is incredible that, given the will, France cannot locate these extra troops. They need not be assigned out here for a regular term of service, but should be available during the next fighting season, October 1953–April 1954. This additional force is so important that, if necessary and at all possible, we should undertake to pay the transportation and other extra-budgetary costs in sending these troops to Indochina. It must be repeated that these troops will not be subtracted from the defense of France and the defense of Europe except temporarily.

Paragraph 3: We agree with Reynaud that in the long run the only key to success in Indochina is the creation of a strong Vietnamese army imbued with the proper nationalist spirit. No American, certainly not the O'Daniel Mission, will agree that for this purpose "the fewer French troops in IC the better". One of the thoughts behind sending the O'Daniel Mission was that we must attempt to gain victory as soon as possible in this area since there is no assurance that time is on our side.

Accordingly, we need temporarily a small reinforcement of French troops, at the same time not neglecting to build up a Vietnamese nationalist army as quickly as possible. Insofar as IC public opinion is concerned, we see no immediate objections to declaration by Reynaud of plan to begin withdrawal in 18 months.

Paragraph 5: Press Saigon is reflecting faithfully the allegation Bidault returned from Washington conversations empty-handed.

Paragraph 6: From our understanding of MDAP practice, we do not turn over cash money to fill military budget deficits. Instead, as in the case of France, we undertake to pay for certain items which would otherwise fall on the national budget. Offhand, we can think of no Vietnamese military budget items which we could undertake to defray as being in the common interest such as European defense. The probable amount involved—$200 million—is, at present rate of exchange, at least 2½ times the total Vietnamese defense budget. Furthermore, our making money available directly or indirectly to Vietnam might tend to discourage the French in continuing a maximum effort in Indochina.

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[1] *Supra.*

With regard to paragraph 7, a declaration by US would appear superfluous as Laos has already been invaded and Viet Minh troops are still active there.

Re paragraph 8, a prompt imaginative statement by DeJean on arrival Saigon of concessions freely made would be highly desirable, would have salutary effect, would help clear atmosphere and should be strongly encouraged, but real interest here is in forthcoming negotiations. We have no indication yet of actual arrival date of DeJean but believe that his arrival and concurrent statement of concessions before the commencement of negotiations might provide a propitious background for them.

With regard to extra aid, Embtel 60 of July 9 to the Department[3] stated that Embassy had been informed that relatively firm French estimate costs of CY 1954 Plan de Campagne, taking account effect of devaluation and French screening, will be available Saigon September or October, and it was suggested, therefore, that any definite commitment made in Washington talks be subject verification facts in Saigon in coming months.

HEATH

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[3] Telegram 60 from Saigon, July 9, which concerned the effects of devaluation on the costs of French military operations for 1954, is not printed. (751G.5 MSP/7-953)

751H.11/7-2553 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, July 25, 1953—8 p. m.

171. Repeated information Paris 54, Hanoi unnumbered, Phnom Penh unnumbered. I went to see the Cambodian King this morning at Siem Reap, arriving two hours after Penn Nouth who had brought with him from Phnom Penh the text of the French reply to Cambodian proposals.[1] Stopping at Phnom Penh en route I had been able to read the note.

The King received me in a very friendly manner and I immediately observed that according to my information the "victory" of his ideas had been complete; the French had granted all of his demands. In fact, the French had gone much further in meeting his demands than I had thought possible.

The King agreed that in both tone and substance the French note was very gratifying. There was only one particular in which it fell short. After unconditionally stating Cambodia's independence, French willingness to meet the proposals put forward by Cambodia and conceding the King full military command in Cambodia the penultimate paragraph of the note, nevertheless, announced that the French would reserve temporarily operational command in the area east of the Mekong River until the military situation improves. If the French had asked for this provisional command instead of bluntly stating they intended to keep it, the King would have granted it without question since he realized that competent defense of this area was necessary for the protection and communications of Laos and the defense of south Vietnam.

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[1] Reference is presumably to a French note of July 22 which is included in French-Cambodian correspondence, July 3–Aug. 3, in Cambodia, *Livre Jaune*, I, pp. 133–146.

I said that I felt certain that this point could be amicably settled by talking the matter over with HICOM Risterucci. The language of the French note might be changed or that paragraph eliminated and handled separately in a "gentleman's agreement" or the King in replying to the note might put that matter straight. In any case I felt certain that the matter could be amicably adjusted.

I went on to say that I had been very struck by the calm and friendly understanding of the King's purpose displayed by Risterucci and General De Langlade. One could almost say they had been advocates of the King's essential proposals. I suggested that he talk the matter over with them.

The King warmly agreed with my description of Risterucci and De Langlade, adding that while he wished to speak no ill of Risterucci's late predecessor, De Raymond, the latter had in fact been partly responsible for recent difficulties in Franco-Cambodian relations.

The King said he would promptly send a delegation to Paris "to explore, but not to negotiate" with the French.

Comment: I did not feel that the first visit after my return was the occasion to take issue with this last statement. Possibly this decision to "explore" rather than enter immediately into negotiations was announced because of the presence at our talk of Tiou Long and Penn Nouth who are more distrustful of the French than the King himself.

Penn Nouth spoke up and said there was one other point in which the French note was unsatisfactory: It had not replied to the seventh point in the Cambodian note "asking the French Government to liquidate under its own responsibility in favor of the States" the assets of the former Indochina Federation. Chargé Montllor immediately spoke up and said that the question of distribution of the assets of the former Indochina Federation (which are practically all in Vietnam and include certain Saigon port works and Hanoi University) had nothing to do with the question of Cambodian independence but was a matter for negotiation.

Comment: The Cambodian demand that France alone liquidate and share the proceeds of the joint assets of the three States is an impossible proposal. These assets are not French assets but the assets of the three States. For the French unilaterally to order and conduct their liquidation would be a violation of the sovereignty of the State where the assets are located.

I asked the King when he would return to Phnom Penh. He appeared embarrassed by the question and said he preferred to remain in Siem Reap and Battambang "where he was away from Cambodian politicians".

Comment: I believe the King is sufficiently intelligent and well disposed to France to realize the very great, not to say complete, capitulation of the French to his demands. . . .

HEATH

751G.00/7–2753: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, July 27, 1953—4 p. m.

330. Eyes only for the Secretary from Ambassador. Indo-China problem rapidly reaching a crisis amid welter of political infighting. Evidence of seriousness of situation is that Laniel has asked me to meet him privately at lunch on Wednesday[1] at house of one of his friends to discuss Indo-China. He did not want meeting to take place at Matignon, because he wishes to avoid all publicity. Laniel apparently not even informing Bidault of meeting.

Situation is apparently as follows:

French Government considers that first year cost of establishing local Vietnam army of necessary size, plus required expenditures by French Union forces above present scale of effort, is on the order of $200 million minimum and may very well run nearer $300 million. French do not have resources available to meet any part of this additional effort. Bidault personally is very averse to requesting US, either formally or informally, to furnish this assistance. He feels that it would be a disaster for himself personally and for present government to make such a request and have it refused in whole or in part. Bidault feels that such an eventuality could even have a serious effect on NATO alliance and might well bring a neutralist government to power in October. Bidault further feels that neutralist sources are commencing a personal attack on him as being the strongest block to their success. There are indications in neutralist press that this is indeed the fact.

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[1] July 29.

Primarily because he believes no further funds are available from Washington for Indo-China, Reynaud has moved close to Mendes-France and neutralist position on Indo-China. Auriol told me Friday that Bidault was leader of group in Cabinet favoring a continuing effort in Indo-China and that he had so far prevailed in Cabinet meetings. Hence importance attached to Bidault views in this telegram.

What French of Bidault persuasion apparently want is for United States, of its own volition, to offer $250 million extra for Indo-China. Even then, they may be attacked here by neutralists as trading French blood for American dollars.

Korean truce, leaving France only nation still at war with Communists, will greatly aggravate situation here.

Action of Senate Appropriations Committee in cutting 100 million from Indo-China appropriation seems like final blow and will, of course, be welcomed by Mendes-France neutralist group as indication US also has no real interest in continuing the war in Indo-China. This cut was reported in local press as being made on advice of administration spokesman.

Unless we are prepared to tell French Government in very near future that necessary funds, i.e., 400 million plus 250 million additional can be made available, I feel that we should be prepared for serious and rapid deterioration of Indo-China situation this fall, possibly leading to effort to open negotiations either directly or indirectly with Ho Chi-Minh by end of year.

Would appreciate any advice you can give me for my meeting Wednesday with Laniel which may well be crucial. In particular, would appreciate any information regarding background of cut in Indo-China appropriation by Senate Committee. I very much hope that this cut will be restored on floor of Senate unless we are actually preparing to let Indo-China go.

Detailed information on Reynaud viewpoint contained in Embassy telegram 285.[2]

DILLON

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[2] Dated July 22, p. 693.

751G.5/7-2753 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, July 27, 1953—7 p. m.

337. Repeated information Saigon 50. Saigon telegram 163, July 24 (Paris 51).[1] While I agree on desirability and need for additional

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[1] *Ante*, p. 696.

French battalions requested by General Navarre for Indochina, I think we must keep in mind delicate state of situation here where questioning of continuation French effort in Indochina has in past month or so reached greater intensity than ever before and where critics of present government deputy are ready to jump on any doubtful act regarding Indochina which provides opportunity for criticism. In view present Parliamentary attitude, it is obviously impossible even to consider sending "contingent" troops to Indochina. While there seems to be possibility that Navarre will obtain additional technicians and officers and non-coms for training Vietnamese troops, no one here seems to think that government will be able to let him have the number of additional battalions he has requested.

In view of general French attitude on this question, we do not think we should try to force issue on having French send these additional battalions. If they should bring matter up, we could and should express our opinion as favoring such action, particularly in light of General O'Daniel's findings. However, I do not believe we would accomplish our purpose if we urged such action on our own initiative. For government to take such action on its own is one thing, but for it to be put in position under present circumstances of having done so under United States pressure would make it very vulnerable to its critics, some of whom are already speaking of trading French blood for United States dollars.

In this general connection, high ranking French military officer has told Embassy officer that Navarre informed him at time of his departure that his demands had been generally "satisfied".

DILLON

751G.5/7–2953 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, July 29, 1953—6 p. m.

370. Limit distribution strictly. I lunched with Laniel today at his own apartment, and he outlined to me the entire basic policy of his government with particular emphasis on the Indochinese problem. He emphasized several times the necessity for the strictest secrecy on this subject, and said that there would be no possibility of any leaks from Paris, but that he was afraid of possible leaks in Washington. Therefore, the contents of this message must be treated with the utmost care in Washington.

Laniel feels that the large decree powers given him by the Assembly make it possible for the first time since the liberation to put France back on her feet and make her a strong member of the community of free nations. These extensive powers also impose on him a heavy responsibility to use them vigorously. Contrary to indications in the press, it is his intention to attack French budgetary problems with the utmost vigor in the next two months so as to achieve the preconditions for a fully balanced budget prior to 1 October. To accomplish this, he plans to remove from the budget all funds for capital investment and to cover these expenses solely by means of long-term loans, the proceeds of which will likewise be excluded from the budget. After this operation, there will still be left a deficit of approximately 400 to 500 billion francs which he proposes to eliminate by savings prior to 1 October. This will require strong action on all parts of the budget, including the military section. His present plan is to cut approximately 150 billion francs from the military side of the budget and upwards of 250 billion francs from the civil side of the budget. The cuts on the civil side of the budget will include items which will necessarily be very unpopular with various segments of the country and will not be politically possible unless, at the same time, there are substantial cuts on the military side of the budget, and the whole operation is sufficient to balance the French budget and put France on the path of fiscal stability. It is absolutely necessary that military expenses in Indochina bear a share of these reductions. The share presently assigned to Indochina is 50 billion francs, with the reduction in European and African military expenses being 100 billion francs.

If France can achieve this balance of the budget, Laniel feels that her position will be infinitely strengthened, that the Communist vote will decline, and that France will feel herself able to move more rapidly in the field of European integration.

It is also the policy of his government to win the war in Indochina. To do this, they are prepared to adopt the general principles of the Navarre plan, including sending approximately nine battalions of additional troops to Indochina. However, the cost of sending and maintaining these additional troops in Indochina, plus the cost of arming, training, and equipping the necessary additional battalions of Vietnam troops, will be approximately 100 billion francs for the French calendar year 1954. Therefore, the Laniel government, in order to carry out its overall plan of winning the war in Indochina and balancing the French budget, needs an additional 150 billion francs for Indochina in calendar 1954. Laniel said that the 100 billion franc figure for the extra cost in Indochina in 1954 was a maximum figure, and that he had instructed General Navarre to do his best to reduce it somewhat.

Laniel said that Bidault had reported, after his Washington trip, that the Secretary of State and Mr. Stassen had told him that there was no hope of getting any additional funds whatsoever from the US for Indochina, and that Bidault was very discouraged to have to make this report. Laniel added that there was no point in sending any additional French forces from France to Indochina unless the funds were also available to build up the Vietnam army for its eventual assumption of responsibility. He pointed out that it would be impossible for him to make the economies which he plans to make in the civil areas of the budget unless he can make similar economies in the military side of the budget, including Indochina. If funds are not available to carry on in Indochina, the only alternative is eventual withdrawal, the only question being the exact method and date on which the withdrawal will take place. He has instructed General Navarre to prepare a new plan on the assumption that no funds will become available, and this plan will be ready shortly and will be available for our information.

Thus, in conclusion, Laniel pointed out that not only the whole question of Indochina, but also the whole problem of balancing the French budget and putting France back into a position where she could make a strong contribution to the European and Atlantic communities, depended on whether or not approximately 150 billion francs additional could be made available for Indochina in calendar 1954.

DILLON

751G.00/7-2953

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of Thai and Malayan Affairs (Landon)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] July 29, 1953.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: The Secretary
His Excellency, Pote Sarasin, Ambassador of Thailand
Kenneth P. Landon

The Secretary invited the Thai Ambassador, Pote Sarasin, to call in fulfillment of a previous promise that after the Foreign Ministers' conference he would discuss further with him the subject of Indochina.

The Secretary mentioned that the military plans of the French General, Henri Navarre, were in general acceptable to the United States military authorities; that the French Government had indicated that it was prepared to grant full and complete independence to the three Associated States on a basis somewhat similar to the Commonwealth Governments such as India; that the French continued to resist the idea of making the Indochina situation a subject of UN discussion although the U.K. and the U.S. had favored it and that, therefore, he would advise that the Thai Government continue to defer its bringing of the case before the United Nations Security Council.

The Thai Ambassador asked whether the Associated States were content with the offer of independence by the French and whether it was indeed complete independence. The Secretary explained that the next move was now up to the Associated States and it was his understanding that they were to write their own ticket, that is, their constitutions and any other documents, and indicate specifically what relationship they wish to establish with France, and that France was in a receptive mood and was prepared to grant them just about anything they might request. He added reflectively that, of course, if the Government fell some other French Government might not feel entirely the same way but that there was every reason to believe that this would continue to be French policy.

751G.00/7–3053 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, July 30, 1953—4 p. m.

196. Repeated information Paris 59, Hanoi unnumbered, Phnom Penh unnumbered. I had a long talk with DeJean yesterday evening. With regard to Cabinet discussions in Paris, he said that government had agreed to initiate "Navarre plan" but could not undertake to carry it through to completion until financing could be found. Navarre would receive a reinforcement of nine battalions from France plus the French battalion now in Korea if UN Command agrees to its departure. The new battalions would leave France—and Korea—on October 1. Navarre would also receive additional cadres, non-coms, and specialists he had demanded. Metropolitan Air Force would send 25 additional C–47s. Navarre had been very effective in pressing his demands against great deal of opposition which objected to further building-up French expeditionary forces in Indochina at expense of build-up of Metropolitan Forces. He, DeJean, thought insistence in France on danger of a Soviet invasion of Europe was unjustified. He did not believe Russia intended or could, in view of its internal difficulties and problems with its satellites, attack in Europe at present time.

DeJean said he was very pleased with Navarre whom he had known for a long time. He was not only an intelligent general but he had political sense as well. Even with reinforcements from France and formation of new Vietnamese battalions, Navarre would be unable to undertake all-out offensive operations in next few months, but there would be a stepping-up of limited offensive moves such as raid on Langson and action at Quang Tri, Annam, which started two days ago. Hitherto, Viet Minh had been able to put practically their entire force in battle lines leaving almost unguarded communications lines and supply centers. This, they would no longer be able to do.

DeJean indicated some belief that Korean armistice[1] signified desire on part of Chinese Communist regime to break away from Russia. To his inquiry I replied that I did not share this opinion.

Comment: I took this as an indication that DeJean believes some sort of an arrangement can be made with China to cease its support of Viet Minh.

DeJean had just returned from seeing Bao Dai at Banmethuot. He spoke in praise of Bao Dai's statesmanlike understanding and wholehearted acceptance of French offer of July 3. Bao Dai would leave about August 1 for Paris to be followed in a week or so by a delegation headed by President Tam.

I told DeJean I thought it very important for him to see Cambodian King as early as possible; that in my opinion King was more reasonable than his advisors. I told him of my conversation of July 25 with King who expressed appreciation and satisfaction with French reply to his note, taking exception only to French statement they intended to exercise temporary military command east of Mekong, instead of requesting Cambodian permission therefor, which King said he would gladly have given. I expressed personal hope that some amicable adjustment of this point would be found; French having gone as far as they had might go a little further and find a formula which would save King's face. DeJean made no reply to this observation. He said he was going today to Phnom Penh to see Prime Minister Penn Nouth and call on Regent, King's father. He would hand Penn Nouth a letter to King expressing hope that His Majesty would receive him and that he could renew pleasant relations which he had enjoyed with King during latter's four weeks' "exile" in Japan. DeJean said he had, in fact, enjoyed very friendly contacts with King during latter's Japanese stay. He had transmitted to King agreement reached in Paris with Cambodian delegates, which King had assured him, since it made substantial concessions to his point of view, was acceptable. King had left immediately thereafter for Phnom Penh and it was great surprise to DeJean to hear that two or three days later he had gone into "exile" again in Bangkok. I remarked that was probably due to influence of King's entourage plus possibly that of Buddhist priests. I remarked King had told me he intended to send delegation to Paris, but now it appeared that Penn Nouth had insisted that negotiations must begin at Phnom Penh. DeJean replied that in any case France intended to complete negotiations with Vietnam before attempting to come to agreement with Cambodia.

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[1] The Korean Armistice agreement was signed at Panmunjom on July 27.

In conclusion, DeJean said he had named Offroy, whom he had known favorably for some years, as his deputy.

HEATH

751G.5/7–3153 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, July 31, 1953—6 p. m.

409. Limit distribution strictly. From MacArthur and Dillon. We dined privately with Laniel last evening at his house. MacArthur presented President's letter,[1] explaining he had come Paris at request of President and Secretary to express to Laniel our strong desire to assist French to reduce Indochina war to manageable proportions; to explain problems the United States faces in this connection; and to get first-hand account from Laniel of French plans and intentions. Laniel was very touched by President's letter and said he would give MacArthur a reply before latter's departure Friday night.

Laniel then went over much same ground he covered with Dillon (Embtel 370).[2] He emphasized his desire to implement rapidly essential elements of Navarre Plan and did not minimize fact that his position regarding Indochina is not shared by all members of his government and will not be popular. While not going into details, he said Bidault fully shared his view about holding in Indochina, but was not entirely happy about France's offer of full independence to the Associated States. Laniel himself will conduct coming conversations with Bao Dai to make crystal clear France is not attaching any strings to offer of independence to Associated States. Laniel plans to take a number of forthright measures, including withdrawal of old line colonial officials, who, he said, are red flags to Indochinese and constant reminder of France's colonial past. While not wishing criticize Indochina policies of past French Governments, Laniel said their military and political concepts had not been adequate to win victory or to engage the support of Associated States. His program was designed to do both. He had confidence in Navarre whom he would fully support with all the available means at his disposal.

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[1] President Eisenhower's letter to Premier Laniel, dated July 28, read as follows:

"I have asked Douglas MacArthur, II, who, as you know, is Counselor of the State Department, to proceed to Paris to convey to you my warm personal greetings and to discuss with you informally problems of common interest. One of these which is much on our mind these days is Indochina.

"While I assume that Mr. MacArthur will seek an audience with you in company with our Ambassador, if you should want to give him any personal messages, I would be glad to receive them.

"You will recall that Mr. MacArthur brought us together in Paris some two years ago and I hope that the acquaintance then begun can be renewed in the not too distant future.

"With assurances of my continued respect," etc. (Secretary's Letters, lot 56 D 459)

In a letter of July 31, Premier Laniel informed the President that he had had a candid and complete discussion with MacArthur, whom he had asked to convey a full account. (Secretary's Letters, lot 56 D 459)

[2] Dated July 29, p. 701.

Laniel did not go into the details of the differences of opinion between Bidault and Reynaud, but remarked significantly that, while he had high regard for Reynaud, latter's thinking with respect to Indochina had not evolved with the times.

Laniel emphasized again entire question of what France can do in Indochina is integral part of larger problem of balancing French budget and placing France in position where she can again make a strong and real contribution to European and Atlantic communities. In final analysis, this will depend on whether the United States will be able to give necessary additional financial assistance amounting to approximately 150 billion additional francs for Indochina for calendar year 1954.

MacArthur then emphasized again President's great interest in assisting France in Indochina and seeing France restored to role of great power. He pointed out from inauguration of new administration, President had made public references to Indochina which were designed to be helpful to France. The bipartite communiqué following Rene Mayer visit last March was for same purpose. United States action with respect to Seventh Fleet and strengthening of Formosa had been designed to create a deterrent threat along the Chinese mainland coast so as to lessen chance of introduction of Chinese "volunteers" into Indochina. Again, in Korean truce negotiations, one consideration had been to create conditions which would make it unlikely that Chinese would withdraw strength from Korea immediately following the armistice for possible use against Indochina. MacArthur explained background of Senate action cutting 100 million and emphasized President and entire United States administration was seeking the restoration of the 100 million in conference. He also explained Bidault's presentation in Washington and fact we had not refused additional aid for Indochina.

Regarding United States administration's presentation to Congress of aid for Indochina, MacArthur pointed out one great difficulty had been total ignorance of both nature and cost of the revised French program. United States was ready and willing to come to grips with the problem, but until it could evaluate the French program in terms of its military value and cost, it was impossible to make a beginning.

Therefore, essential for French to present United States soonest with information on all aspects of program.

Until the United States had this information, it could not even tackle the job of trying to see what assistance it could give. MacArthur indicated that while he could make no commitment, he could tell Laniel that the United States was much encouraged by General O'Daniel's report of the aggressive spirit of the new French command in Indochina. The President and United States administration were also greatly encouraged by France's forthright action of July 3 in offering full independence to the Associated States. He could also assure Laniel that the United States sincerely desired to assist financing added cost of an additional French effort under an approved program. MacArthur said he must tell Laniel we had not envisaged cost of program of magnitude suggested by Laniel, and he did not know what we could do. However, if French program were fully adequate and designed to achieve real success, and if resources were not now available, there was possibility that administration could seek supplementary Congressional appropriation when the Congress reconvenes next year.

Laniel expressed appreciation for MacArthur's visit. He recognized that cost of French program very substantial, but did not think anything less would produce success. It was pointless to pour good money after bad or take steps which had no chance of achieving success. If United States could not provide necessary assistance, France would withdraw from Indochina. Laniel made it clear that as long as he is Premier, he would not agree to such a withdrawal, but if necessary United States aid was not forthcoming, he would be succeeded by a government which would withdraw. He said that the combination of Bidault's report that the United States was not willing to finance an additional French effort, and Senate cut of 100 million had depressed him very deeply, and it had been largely on the basis of these two events that he had requested Navarre to prepare a fall back plan on the assumption that no additional resources would become available. He instructed Navarre that plan should be based on fact that safety of French expeditionary force had absolute priority. Navarre had replied that he would prepare such a plan, but if no substantial additional resources were available to build up native forces and temporarily increase French forces, long run situation was hopeless, and he could only plan a holding operation with eventual withdrawal.

In conclusion, Laniel re-emphasized the necessity for strict secrecy on this exchange of views. MacArthur told him he had asked to pay courtesy visit on Bidault[3] and asked what he should say. Laniel suggested MacArthur tell Bidault that he had seen Laniel and had stressed the urgency of receiving complete French program for Indochina soonest and that Laniel agreed that plans with costing, et cetera, would be turned over to Ambassador Dillon soonest. To insure plans reach United States in comprehensible form, Dillon suggested that French go over them with Labouisse.

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[3] MacArthur, Dillon, and Bidault met on the afternoon of July 31. The meeting was described in telegram 413 from Paris, July 31; for text, see volume VI.

Laniel then mentioned to MacArthur his earnest desire to visit United States and confer with President if agreement could be reached on Indochina program. He recognized President very fully occupied, but said if United States and France reached agreement on additional effort in Indochina, such a visit would greatly strengthen his hand.

MacArthur and I both have the strong impression that Laniel sincerely and honestly wants to carry through his stepped up program for Indochina as a part of a major overall effort to put France's house in order.[4] If he receives necessary assistance from United States, we believe he will pursue Indochina effort vigorously. If he does not receive such assistance, his chances of lasting much beyond October are not bright, and he will probably be replaced by a government which will be willing to let Indochina go down the drain.

DILLON

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[4] On Aug. 4, Ambassador Dillon transmitted a letter to Under Secretary Smith enclosing a memorandum that commented in detail on Prime Minister Laniel's economic and financial programs, including his efforts to address the problems posed by the war in Indochina; for text, see volume VI.

Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, lot 64 D 199

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (Murphy)[1]

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] July 31, 1953.

Subject: Visit of Ambassador Bonnet Regarding Korean Political Conference[2]

Participants: The Secretary
Ambassador Henri Bonnet (France)
Ambassador Lodge
Mr. Robert Murphy

Indo-China

The French Ambassador called and left with the Secretary an *Aide-Mémoire* of July 31,[3] stating that it appears indispensable to the

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[1] Robert D. Murphy served as Acting Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in addition to his duties as Assistant Secretary of State.

[2] For additional documentation on discussions following the Korean Armistice, see volume XV.

[3] The French *aide-mémoire*, discussing various procedural methods whereby political discussions pursuant to the Korean Armistice agreement could be employed to produce negotiations concerning Indochina, is not printed. (795.00/8-753)

French Government that the exchange of views undertaken by the Foreign Ministers at Washington concerning the question of Indo-China be raised in the political negotiations following the Korean armistice.

The Secretary said that the formulae outlined in paragraph 3 of the *Aide-Mémoire* seemed to be impracticable, but that he thought the procedure described in paragraph 4 might be feasible.[4] To the Secretary's question whether the Ambassador expected a written reply to the *Aide-Mémoire*, Mr. Bonnet replied in the negative.

Ambassador Bonnet emphasized the urgency from the French point of view of prompt attention to this question. Urgent pressure is being generated in France for a solution of the Indo-Chinese problem now that a truce has been achieved in Korea. With the cessation of fighting in the North, the question of the Chinese attitude toward operations in the South [has] become front-page. In his opinion, the Political Conference offers a logical and ideal opportunity for informal, marginal discussion with the Chinese Communist representatives.

[Here follows discussion of the Political Conference on Korea.]

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[4] Paragraph 3 suggested means by which the political conference contemplated for Korea might take up the subject of Indochina. Paragraph 4 raised the possibility of two separate, parallel conferences.

751G.11/8–153 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, August 1, 1953—7 p. m.

212. Repeated information Paris 64, Hanoi, Phnom Penh unnumbered. Bao Dai arrived yesterday afternoon and left at 4:30 this morning for Paris. I saw him yesterday just after he had talked with DeJean.

Contrary to his state of mind during his last visit to Saigon, Bao Dai appeared in very good spirits and brim full of confidence, confidence in himself, his personal situation, and in French intentions. He told me he had just said to DeJean that with the July 3 declaration "Vietnam has no demands (revendications) to make of France; I am going to France to ask what requests France has to make of Vietnam". He went on to say that it was only just that France should ask for certain advantages after granting full independence to Vietnam.

If France intended to have her soldiers continue to fight side by side with Vietnamese against Communism, she was clearly entitled to be assured of certain advantages.

He said the delegation that would follow him to France would include members of political parties and lay representatives of the various religions. When I looked rather quizzical when he mentioned Vietnamese "political parties", Bao Dai said that while they were small and not really organized, they nevertheless had an influence on Vietnamese public opinion.

The question of Tam's visit to the United States coming up, Bao Dai said he would be against Tam going to the States prior to successful conclusion of negotiations with France. He said frankly that while Tam was a good man, he was not popular in Vietnam. If, however, as he fully believed, the negotiations in France were successful and would place Franco-Vietnamese relations on a new, equal, and friendly basis satisfying Vietnamese public opinion, then there would be no Vietnamese objections to Tam going to Washington. I pointed out that the original date of Tam's visit had been postponed from the latter part of August to September 21, further explaining that President Tam had been offered the option of choosing any date between September 21 and October 27. Bao Dai said that it was possible that negotiations in France would be satisfactorily concluded by August or early September, but that September 21 might be a few days too early. Personally he would prefer that Tam's visit be preceded by a visit of General Hinh to consult with Defense authorities in Washington.

After returning to the theme of his great hopes for satisfactory negotiations in France, he suddenly inquired whether, if he asked me to come to France during these negotiations, I could come. I said I would be glad to come but could not answer in advance of the approval of my government. I might be able to come unofficially on leave of absence.

Comment: I doubt that occasion will arise for Bao Dai to ask me to come to France during the negotiations. Department please comment or instruct.

After my talk with Bao Dai I spoke to Nguyen De, Director of Imperial Cabinet, who is apparently more than ever trusted by Bao Dai. Since Nguyen De will accompany Tam to the States, I informed him that Bao Dai thought that September 21 was perhaps too early. De felt certain that the negotiations in France would be satisfactorily terminated by the end of August and that September 21 would be an appropriate date.

Comment: Cheysson, French adviser to Tam, tells me that French Government is determined to finish the negotiations by the end of August.

I asked De whether in view of the new situation following France's declaration of July 3 there were likely to be changes in the government, particularly whether His Majesty was giving any thought to the "solution" proposed by many Vietnamese of himself taking over the Prime Ministership of a government of national unity. He said that His Majesty was still opposed to that idea, but was now at the point of really taking into his own hands the formation and organization, but not the command, of the Vietnamese National Army. To my question whether His Majesty would actually make inspections or wear a uniform, De replied he would certainly make inspections and added that His Majesty had been devoting more and more time to the army. General Hinh and Defense Minister Quat had been increasingly summoned to Banmethuot.

In conclusion De very clearly indicated his opinion that Tam would remain on as Prime Minister for some months to come but negotiations with the French would be followed with Cabinet changes.

HEATH

751G.00/8–353 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, August 3, 1953—6 p. m.

221. Repeated information Paris 67, Hanoi unnumbered. I had long talk with Cheysson, French political adviser to President Tam, over week end. He remarked that the long interregnum that occurred while French were trying to form government last May and June had one relieving advantage. Political leaders had had really to think out problem of Indochina and government that finally emerged came up with ideal policy expressed in the declaration of July 3.

Policy, Cheysson said, was excellent but reasoning and lack of determination behind this policy on part of Reynaud and other leaders were very far from ideal. He had talked with Reynaud, Bidault and others and, in general, feared there was no real intention to accompany more liberal policy toward Associated States with effective measures to carry on war here until victories won. On contrary, he thought Reynaud and others, while willing to increase French military effort for a short term, provided financial help from US was available, had no intention of continuing present effort over any protracted period. Instead they hoped for sufficient victories to enable them to make some sort of deal with Chinese or Viet Minh, and thus allow France to withdraw troops and reduce expenditures without apparent loss of face or honor.

HEATH

Editorial Note

On August 4, 1953, during the course of an address to the Governors Conference at Seattle, Washington, President Eisenhower discussed the importance of United States aid to France in support of the war in Indochina in view of the significance of the latter with regard to the security of South and Southeast Asia. For text of the address, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*, pages 536–544. The portion of the speech pertaining to Indochina also is printed in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, volume I, pages 203–204.

S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351

Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Acting Secretary of State

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] August 5, 1953.

FURTHER SUPPORT FOR FRANCE AND INDOCHINA

1. The attached paper[1] has been placed on the NSC paper [*agenda?*] for August 6, as a matter of urgency. It recommends that a forthcoming French request for additional budgetary assistance in the order of 400 million dollars be approved, subject to a JCS determination that the French plans promise success and a report by the Administrator of the Foreign Operations Agency on the procurement of funds, from either existing or supplementary appropriations.

2. The new French government of M. Laniel is the first in seven years which appears capable of achieving success in Indochina and a consequent strengthening of France in Europe. It cannot pursue its plans over domestic opposition without aid from the United States.

3. The issues for the NSC are in essence whether the United States should grasp a promising opportunity to further a satisfactory conclusion of the war in Indochina within the next two fighting years;

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[1] The attachment does not accompany the source text in the files. It is presumably the report to the National Security Council printed *infra*.

or whether it is prepared to substitute its own forces for the French in the defense of Indochina; or whether it is prepared to accept the loss of Indochina and possibly other areas of South East Asia.

4. Confronted with these alternatives, it seems clear that the United States should grant the French request.

R. R. BOWIE

S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351

Report to the National Security Council by the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, August 5, 1953.]

FURTHER UNITED STATES SUPPORT FOR FRANCE AND THE ASSOCIATED STATES OF INDOCHINA

1. Within the week the French government intends to submit to this Government its new program for victory in Indochina and its formal request for additional United States aid in the order of 150 billion francs ($400 million) for CY 1954. The situation in Indochina has reached the crossroads. For the first time, the French program offers a real hope of solving this problem which is also at the core of French weakness and hesitation in Europe. Conversely, if this opportunity is not grasped and exploited, the situation is almost certain to disintegrate rapidly with the disastrous French withdrawal as a final outcome. Accordingly, the United States and France must promptly decide on the course to be adopted.

2. *a.* Since World War II, the war in Indochina has been a heavy drain on French military and financial resources. For several years France has been spending at the rate of $1.2 billion a year on this effort, and in the seven years the French Union has had 148,000 casualties. This has absorbed a large percentage of the officers and noncommissioned officers of the regular French army.

b. Yet the results have been discouraging. The past campaign season has been disappointing. The Viet Minh retains the strategic initiative. Chinese material aid has markedly increased. Inevitably the war has become increasingly unpopular in France and has led to growing demands for withdrawal, and for ending the war.

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[1] The copy of this report located in the files of the Policy Planning Staff bears a handwritten notation indicating that it was drafted by Robert R. Bowie, Director, and Edmund A. Gullion of S/P. (PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "Indochina") By memorandum of Aug. 5, James S. Lay, Jr., Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, circulated the report to the members of the Council for consideration at the 158th Meeting of the NSC, Aug. 6. (S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351) For the record of action taken by the Council on the subject of the report at the 158th Meeting, see *infra*.

3. This constant drain on French resources has had damaging effects on her domestic and foreign policy:

a. The costs of this war, on top of those of rearming within NATO, have been a major factor in the French budgetary deficits, the attendant inflation, and the resulting financial instability. United States assistance while substantial has not been able to prevent these consequences.

b. The apparently endless commitment in Indochina has been a major cause of hesitation and vacillation in French policy toward EDC and German rearmament. Uncertain whether she could maintain military equality with Germany while carrying the military and financial load of Indochina, France has sought to delay and postpone EDC and drifted toward neutralism.

The winding up of the Indochina war is a necessary condition to enable France to check both these trends and reassume a more confident and positive role on the continent.

4. The lack of success so far in Indochina is traceable largely to French failure:

a. by timely grants of sovereignty and impressive military success, to win a sufficient native support to permit more rapid development of larger and more effective native armies, and to frustrate nationalist appeal of the Viet Minh.

b. to plan and execute aggressive military operations.

5. The present French government is the first in seven years which seems prepared to do what needs to be done to wind up the war in Indochina. Its plans offer the United States at last an opportunity to attack the major Indochinese and Metropolitan French problems as a whole. The French Premier has assured our representatives that his government is anxious to continue the struggle and to press on to win, but he can carry through his program against political opposition only if he offers a "package" solution, not only of Indochina but of the related French weakness in Europe and at home. For this purpose the new government has developed the following program:

a. Military Initiative. A new commander, General Navarre, has taken over in Indochina and is determined to assume the offensive. The initial operations under his command testify to this resolve. He has revised the plan originally presented in outline to us by M. Letourneau in March 1953 for breaking the back of Viet Minh resistance during the campaign season of 1954–55. His plans include an increase in the native armies by approximately the following figures: 59,600 in 1953; 76,000 in 1954; and 20,000 in 1955 for a total of 331,650 by January 1956. At his request, the French government is prepared, despite popular opposition, to send nine more regular infantry battalions plus ancillary units from France, if the rest of the program is agreed on. The Navarre operational plans drawn up on Indochina were approved by Lt. Gen. O'Daniel, USA, in his report on his recent mission.

b. Political Program. Pursuant to the French declaration of July 3, M. Laniel has assured U.S. representatives of his determination to grant genuine independence to the Associated States without the strings which have marked the previous grants of "independence". He apparently envisages something very much like Dominion status, retaining only such French authority and privileges as may be agreed.

c. Fiscal Rehabilitation. Laniel conceives his project for Indochina as an integral part of a new and supreme effort by France to "put its house in order". He plans to approach a balanced budget during CY 1954. This will involve a cut in French military as well as civil expense for that year. At the same time he contemplates a greater effort in Indochina. To do this he asks the U.S. for additional assistance amounting to about $400 million for FY 1954.

6. *a.* Attached are two tables[2] showing (1) the financing of the Indochina war in CY 1953 and as proposed for CY 1954; and (2) U.S. aid for France and Indochina under 1953 program and 1954 appropriations. They contain tentative figures for 1954.

b. As the first table makes clear, under the proposed program, the United States would assume about 50 per cent of the 1954 budgetary expenditures ($829 million out of $1,676 million) and, if end-item aid is included, would be carrying about 61 per cent of the total financing. This would represent about two and one-third times the amount of U.S. aid for CY 1953.

c. As shown by the second table, this program would entail an increase of $403 million over the assistance now planned for France ($1,286 million). Of the total French military budget for both Indochina and NATO, the presently planned U.S. aid, including end items, would be 26 per cent; if the aid were increased as requested, such U.S. assistance, including end items, would be 34 per cent of the total.

d. Finally, as the first table indicates, under the program, the total expenditures for Indochina for 1954, including end items, would be $2,160 million as compared with $1,700 for CY 1953.

7. The program presents substantial risks. Under it, the French build-up in Europe would be slowed down in some degree, both by the limited troop diversion and the cut in the French military budget. Moreover, in the best of circumstances, the Indo-Chinese war cannot be successfully closed out before the 1954–55 fighting season. Consequently, in addition to any supplemental aid furnished now, we would have to contemplate a comparable further contribution a year from now to assure a satisfactory conclusion. Furthermore, there is the risk

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[2] The tables, not printed here, are printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 130–133.

that the French Union forces in Indo-China might suffer reverses before the projected additional effort can be brought to bear.

8. Despite these risks and uncertainties it is believed that the U.S. should agree, in its own security interests, to furnish the additional $400 million of aid to France. Various factors lead to this conclusion:

a. The Laniel government is almost certainly the *last* French government which would undertake to continue the war in Indo-China. If it fails, it will almost certainly be succeeded by a government committed to seek a settlement on terms dangerous to the security of the U.S. and the Free World. The negotiation of a truce in Korea, added to the frustrations and weariness of the seven years' war, has markedly increased the sentiment in France for some kind of negotiated peace in Indo-China. In the recent protracted French governmental crisis, every leading candidate bid for popular support with some kind of promise to reduce the Indo-China commitment in some way. For the first time in seven years, latent defeatist impulses emerged into real efforts by political and parliamentary leaders to "pull out".

b. Under present conditions any negotiated settlement would mean the eventual loss to Communism not only of Indo-China but of the whole of Southeast Asia.

c. The loss of Indo-China would be critical to the security of the U.S. Communist control of Indo-China would endanger vital raw material sources; it would weaken the confidence of other Southeast Asian states in Western leadership; it would make more difficult and more expensive the defense of Japan, Formosa and the Philippines; and complicate the creation of viable Japanese economy. If the French actually decided to withdraw, the U.S. would have to consider most seriously whether to take over in this area.

d. On the other hand, if the proposed program does succeed, and the French are able to achieve victory in Indo-China within two years, the effect will be to strengthen the Free World and our coalition in Europe as well as Southeast Asia. France will be enabled to adopt in Europe the active role which her weakness has undermined in the preceding period.

Recommendation

9. Accordingly it is recommended that the National Security Council agree to an increase in aid to France in the current fiscal year by an amount not exceeding $400 million above that already committed, provided only that (*a*) the Joint Chiefs of Staff inform the National Security Council that in their view the French plan holds the promise of military success; and (*b*) the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration ascertain the available sources within currently appropriated funds, and the extent to which a special supplementary appropriation will be necessary when Congress reconvenes in January 1954.

S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "Record of Actions"

Record of Actions by the National Security Council at Its 158th Meeting, August 6, 1953[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

. . . .

874. *Further United States Support for France and the Associated States of Indochina* (Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated August 5, 1953)[2]

a. [The National Security Council] Noted and discussed the report by the Department of State on the subject enclosed with the reference memorandum, on the basis of an oral presentation by the Acting Secretary of State.[3]

b. Agreed that the Department of State, the Foreign Operations Administration, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff should proceed promptly with further exploration, in consultation with the French, of the proposed French program.

c. Agreed that, if the Department of State, the Foreign Operations Administration, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff find that the proposed French program holds promise of success and can be implemented effectively, the U.S. should agree to furnish necessary additional support for the French program and the Department of State and the Foreign Operations Administration should submit for Council consideration detailed recommendations for doing so, including consideration of such factors as:

(1) The provision at this time of additional aid approximating $200 million out of present appropriations, with the understanding that efforts will be made to provide an additional $200 million in the spring of 1954 and possibly comparable further funds in FY 1955, provided the results of the French program at the time appear to justify the additional funds.

(2) Continued implementation by the French of their promises to enable the peoples of the Associated States to progress toward independence.

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[1] This record of actions indicates that the President presided at the meeting. The Secretary of the Treasury (George M. Humphrey) and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget (Joseph M. Dodge) participated in the actions of the Council. The set of NSC memoranda of discussion at the Eisenhower Library does not include a record of the 158th Meeting.

[2] Reference is to the report printed *supra* and the brief covering memorandum by which it was circulated.

[3] An undated and otherwise unidentified "Outline for Oral Presentation", not printed, accompanies the text of the report here under consideration (*supra*) in S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351. It is essentially a condensed version of the report.

d. Agreed that it would be very helpful, in working out common problems of France and the United States:

(1) To keep close contact with French military planning and operations in Indochina through participation in an advisory capacity of a high-ranking United States officer, and

(2) For the French Government to make a concerted effort to obtain early French ratification of EDC.

e. Noted that the President would be willing to release the French battalion in Korea for service in Indochina at an appropriate time.

Note: The actions in *b*, *c*, *d* and *e* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration for appropriate implementation.

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751J.00/8–753 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, August 7, 1953—7 p. m.

245. Repeated Paris 72. Crown Prince Savang, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma and other members Laotian Government spent two days in Saigon this week returning from France to Vientiane.

Savang and Souvanna Phouma said that there was no urgency with regard to negotiations with France on basis of French declaration of July and that Laotian taking over of services now controlled by French would be done in an "evolutionary" and not "revolutionary" manner.

With regard to the Pau Agreements,[1] Laos has taken the position that they will not negotiate new arrangements with France or other countries until one of parties has formally informed other signatories of its intention to denounce agreements. Cambodian Government had announced on radio and in press interviews that they intended to break Currency and Customs Union Agreements but has not officially served notice to Laos or Vietnam to that effect. Savang said that Laos had no objection to present quadripartite agreements and from purely economic viewpoint regretted their abrogation. Main trouble was Cambodian hatred and fear of Vietnam. It was this Cambodian attitude toward Vietnam that made any tripartite or quadripartite agreement practically impossible.

Both Crown Prince and Souvanna Phouma were less concerned with new arrangements with France for greater independence for Laos than with problem of military protection of their country. Savang insisted if French would give them arms and permission to go ahead that by commando operations existing Laotian units during remainder of rainy season could decimate Viet Minh battalions which had remained in Laos, presently divided among villages for necessary shelter from rains.

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[1] See footnote 4, p. 30.

Savang expressed belief that with return of dry weather Viet Minh would not attempt to repeat their invasion of Laos last spring. They would, however, maintain battalions still in Laos and continue their by no means unsuccessful political indoctrination and infiltration of mountain peoples and villages. Viet Minh had, he said, sent promising youngsters for political schooling in China and he believed even some were being sent to Moscow.

Savang went on to say that if contrary to his expectations Viet Minh launched another fairly large-scale push and attempted to reach Mekong, move would be ordered by Chinese Communists and would be prelude to Communist attempt to take over Thailand. If Viet Minh could really establish themselves on Mekong, he thought Thailand might easily fall under Communist sway. Thai Government and army were weak and there would be no spirit in people to resist such an invasion. Pridi, according to Savang, is more Chinese than Siamese and would probably work for Communists.

Comment: General Navarre will accompany DeJean to Laos next day or two and will investigate possibility of Laotians conducting with French help counter-guerilla operation during rains. All DeJean would say to me about Prince's optimism regarding success of commando operations against Viet Minh was that "he hoped Prince was right in his estimate of Laotian capacity to conduct such operations".

Without being very explicit, DeJean clearly indicated that problem of protecting Laos against Viet Minh operations and at same time protecting Tonkin delta was a very difficult, not to say anxious, problem for French Command.

HEATH

751G.5/8–853

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] August 8, 1953.

Subject: Transfer of French Battalion from Korea to Indochina

Participants: Minister Daridan, French Embassy
General Smith, Acting Secretary
U. Alexis Johnson, Acting Assistant Secretary, FE

Mr. Daridan stated that he had received a telephone call last night from Maurice Schumann, Acting Foreign Minister, asking the Embassy informally to determine our views with regard to transfer of most of the French battalion from Korea to form cadres in Indochina and to replace French troops being transferred from Germany to

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[1] Drafted by U. Alexis Johnson, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.

Indochina. He stated they desired to make this informal inquiry in order not to embarrass us as they knew our attitude with regard to the maintenance of strength of the UN forces in Korea.

General Smith replied that if the battalion in Korea was transferred to Indochina so as to increase from 9 to 10 the number of additional French battalions being furnished to Navarre and thus come that much closer to Navarre's request for 12 battalions, we not only would have no objection but would be strongly in favor of such a move. However, we would like sufficient formal notification so as to permit us to obtain a replacement battalion which we thought might be done from one of the other UN countries supplying forces in Korea. General Smith indicated the great interest of this government in doing everything possible to assist the French in bringing the war in Indochina to a successful conclusion and our favorable impression of the energy with which General Navarre was attacking the situation.

In response to a question from Mr. Daridan in which he indicated the French were considering leaving a token force in Korea in order to preserve their position for the Korean political conference, General Smith stated that from our standpoint this would not be necessary. As France would be withdrawing troops solely for the purpose of putting them into the already active fight in Indochina their position would be quite different from that of any other country which might withdraw forces and we felt that the matter could and should be presented in a manner that would be favorable to France. However, General Smith stressed that our views on this were based on the assumption that the battalion from Korea would be additional to the 9 battalions which France already planned to furnish to General Navarre.

Mr. Daridan thanked General Smith for the information and indicated he would immediately transmit it to Paris.[3]

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[3] In Note No. 494 of Aug. 20, the French Embassy formally advised the Department of State of the intention of France to transfer the battalion from Korea to Indochina. The Department responded in a note of Aug. 22 that the United States was in full agreement with the French decision. (FE files, lot 55 D 388, "Indochina")

751G.00/8–1153

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] August 11, 1953.

Subject: Military-Political Situation in Indochina

Participants: Lt. Gen. Paul Ely, French Member on NATO Military
Committee Standing Group
Philip W. Bonsal, PSA

General Ely has just been named to a job of Chief of the French Joint Chiefs of Staff. (He has been the French member of NATO

Standing Group.) I asked him to lunch today because the press reported that he would take over his new job on August 20. He tells me, however, that he will not leave for Paris until early October.

General Ely and I discussed the military-political situation in Indochina. I found him completely alive to the importance of military success in Indochina from the point of view not only of the free world's position in Southeast Asia but more particularly from the point of view of France's own position in the world. He tended strongly to discount the argument that France should withdraw her forces from Indochina in order to make a better showing in Europe. He thinks that on the contrary the place where the enemy must be met is where he is currently attacking. General Ely is most impressed with the possible disastrous consequences on France's own world position of a withdrawal from Indochina leaving the field to the enemy.

General Ely spoke highly of General Navarre and of General Gambiez[1] both of whom are personal friends of his. He believes that they possess a combination of resourcefulness and tenacity which will insure that the best possible use will be made of the Franco-Vietnamese forces in the current campaign. He is aware of the serious problem involved in the possible enemy offensive this fall. He considers that the most serious possibility involved would be the cutting of Laos in two at about the level of Savannakhet.

General Ely stated that soon after he takes over his new job he intends to visit Indochina. He also informed me that he is a great friend of Parodi's and that it was at his suggestion that Parodi last year visited Indochina. He states that Parodi came back much impressed with the importance of the French effort and is optimistic as to the possibilities of a policy of aggressiveness and perseverance within the framework of course of a complete abandonment of "colonialism".

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[1] Chief of Staff to General Navarre.

751G.00/8–1353 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, August 13, 1953—6 p. m.

566. Repeated information Saigon 72, Moscow 29. Reference Deptel 468 (Saigon 235, Moscow 99), August 12.[1] Foreign Office official expresses opinion omission reference Democratic Republic Vietnam from Malenkov speech [2] in no way lends support view Communists planning

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[1] Not printed.

[2] Reference is to the speech delivered to the Supreme Soviet on Aug. 8 by Georgiy Maksimilianovich Malenkov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. For extracts, see *Documents on International Affairs, 1953*, pp. 22–33.

"drop" Viet Minh just as they dropped Greek Communists. Foreign Office considers omission deliberately designed further theme of currying favor French through avoidance any reference likely undermine that segment French opinion desirous early negotiated conclusion hostilities Indochina. As consequence, Foreign Office has no present intention use this omission propaganda-wise.

Embassy suggests possibility omission may have also been intended enable Soviets continue fiction they have no connection with what they term "liberation movements" in Southeast Asia.

DILLON

751G.5/8-1453 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, August 14, 1953—12:43 p. m.

243. Limit distribution. In course discussions on Indochina in French Cabinet late July, stimulated by cut proposed by United States Senate Committee in aid program, Laniel had confidential talk with Dillon on basic policy French Government, including plans for Indochina. Laniel said decree powers Assembly gave him had imposed obligation take measures create conditions permitting France balance its budget. He stressed improvement in budgetary situation essential restore France to position of strength. Said policy also win war Indochina and for this prepared accept general principles Navarre plan, including transfer about nine battalions additional troops and cost additional Viet-Nam battalions. Emphasizing impossible carry out greater effort Indochina and improve budgetary situation without financial help he expressed view solution whole problem Indochina and French contribution to European and Atlantic communities depended on what additional aid available calendar year 1954.

Fully appreciating critical situation arising from growing French opinion favoring negotiation and withdrawal just when vigorous French leadership in both military and political spheres opens prospect (probably last chance) of victorious solution, Secretary sent MacArthur to Paris for further exchange of views. Laniel has emphasized necessity strict secrecy these exchanges. Laniel has expressed belief if United States could not provide necessary aid he would be succeeded by government which would withdraw from Indochina. Laniel has urged United States make advance commitment provide necessary assistance perhaps to extent 150 billion francs above presently contemplated levels.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal and Day of PSA.

Limitations on authority to make specific commitments funds have been explained to Laniel. Extent to which we can give assurances desired depends on decisions to be reached after State, Defense and Foreign Operations Administration have reviewed figures and justifications which French now urgently preparing and all sources of additional funds have been ascertained.

More detailed information being pouched you.

DULLES

751G.00/8–1453: Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET

HANOI, August 14, 1953—10 a. m.
[Received 1:08 p. m.]

94. Repeated Saigon 64, Paris 46. Regarding evacuation of Nasan yesterday, General Cogny said that in 560 flights (maximum in one day being 130 compared with high point of 85 flights when Nasan was being built up last fall) air force carried out total of about 10,000 persons, including 1,800 Thai families. He said performance of air force personnel was magnificent and that only casualty suffered during operation was crack up in Hanoi on take-off of one of evacuation planes; one man killed in this accident.

Night of August 11 after air evacuation had been suspended was one of great anxiety for Cogny. Although he had announced battalion remaining at Nasan would strike out by road, and it would in fact have done so, he had no hope that any considerable number of these troops could make their way back to safety. Tropical depression which forced suspension of airlift might have continued through the week, or well beyond period battalion could remain Nasan with any degree of security. Air control personnel at Nasan instead of pulling out on last planes of August 11, as they might justifiably have done, took a chance on remaining with battalion. When August 12 dawned bright and clear throughout Tonkin, planes took to the air again and by 1300 hours the last evacuee had arrived safely in Hanoi.

Cogny admits that this delicate manoeuvre could not have been executed so faultlessly without an admixture of luck. Nevertheless, it was equally the product of excellent planning and first-rate aviation-ground forces cooperation.

General said it was not yet certain what disposition would be made of three Thai battalions evacuated. Some may be sent to Laichau, but since they are black Thais rather than the white Thais of Laichau, this cultural difference could cause difficulties. Cogny said he hoped evacuation of Nasan would not give rise to any unwarranted assumption that Laichau will be evacuated in like manner. Severe pressure might in due course force evacuation of Laichau, he said, but that is not contemplated under any other circumstances. He will go there himself tomorrow reassure Thai Federation President Deo-Vnd-Long.

Cogny expressed enormous relief not only at having successfully carried out evacuation of Nasan, but also at being rid of great and useless burden of supporting strong point logistically. He feels also he has gained equivalent of several battalions in addition to the 4 evacuated in sense that he need no longer hold units in reserve to put into Nasan in case of attack.

STURM

751G.00/8-1453

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] August 14, 1953.

Subject: Indochina Aid; Indochina and the Korean Political Conference; Madame Pandit's candidacy to the Presidency of the General Assembly.

Participants: M. Jean Daridan, French Chargé
The Under Secretary
Mr. Bonsal

[Here follows a brief account of discussion on Morocco.]

Aid to Indochina. M. Daridan, on behalf of M. Schumann, referred to recent exchanges of views on this subject and asked when the U.S. would be in a position to make a definite commitment of additional aid. The Under Secretary stated that he understands that our Embassy in Paris and M. Jacquet, the French Minister of State charged with Indochina Affairs, are in close touch and that we hope shortly to receive all the information promised by our French friends and required by us. He said that he himself is most anxious to go before the National Security Council in order to obtain definitive approval of the policy of additional aid to which preliminary approval has already been given. The Under Secretary stated that for this purpose he needed from the Department of Defense a final and favorable judgment as to the military elements of the Navarre plan and from Mr. Stassen, of the Foreign Operations Administration, a similar evaluation of the cost factors involved. The Under Secretary concluded that he hoped everything would be done both by the French and by interested agencies of our Government so that he could make his final presentation during the week beginning August 24th.

Indochina and the Korean Political Conference. M. Daridan referred to M. Schumann's great interest in having our views on the possibility that we and the British would, at the Korean Political Conference support the French in an attempt either in the conference or collaterally to find some basis for terminating hostilities in Indochina through negotiation. M. Daridan emphasized the position already taken by M. Bidault when he was in Washington on July 10–14 to the effect that, in order to support an aggressive conduct of the war in Indochina, the French Cabinet and French parliamentary leaders must be given the clear impression that their government is leaving no way untried to secure an end to the Indochina conflict, including the way of negotiation which has at least achieved the cessation of hostilities in the case of Korea.

In reply, the Under Secretary stated that we were most anxious, as we had demonstrated, to give maximum support to the French in Indochina. He recalled, as had been pointed out by the Secretary to M. Bidault, that at the present time the situation in Indochina does not seem to present that basis of strength essential to a negotiation with the Communists. Looked at realistically, the situation is one which our common enemy has an interest in prolonging. Our understanding is that French military and political plans as well as our own assistance both present and future are designed to shift the balance in the free world direction. But it is evident that a prolongation of the present situation is at present in the enemy's interest.

The Under Secretary then said most emphatically that we can at this time make no commitment to enlarge the agenda of the Korean Political Conference to make a place for Indochina or for any other topic other than the status of Korea. The Under Secretary touched briefly but forcefully upon the various reasons of a domestic political nature which make it impossible for our Government to depart from this position.

M. Daridan expressed disappointment. He said that our present position on this point seemed to be even more negative than that described by the Secretary to M. Bidault last month. He asked whether, if the French delegation should be able at the conference to develop on its own initiative and through its own efforts a promising prospect of negotiation on Indochina, either in the framework of the conference or otherwise, the United States would then support the French initiative. To this the Under Secretary again replied that he could make no commitment whatever at this time beyond stating that we would not, of course, refuse to examine any situation which the French might present to us but that he could not, at this time, give any indication as to what our attitude might be at the time. The Under Secretary was most anxious that there be no misunderstanding on this point.

[Here follows a brief account of discussion on the candidacy of Madame Pandit of India for the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly.]

M. Daridan then said that he was, of course, disappointed at the results of his conversation with the Under Secretary. On two points to which the French Government attached importance, namely the exploration with U.S. support of the possibility of an Indochina negotiation at the Korean Political Conference and the possibility of a change in the United States support of the Pandit candidacy, the Under Secretary had stated positions which the French Government must regard as negative. These positions would not assist the French Government in securing the necessary support for its policies, including the positive policies on which it has embarked in Indochina. Nevertheless, M. Daridan said that he himself, while he regretted our decisions, understood the difficulties with which we were faced and would give a complete report thereon to his Government.

In reply, the Under Secretary expressed appreciation of M. Daridan's attitude. He added that in carrying out the program of positive support for the French effort in Indochina upon which we are embarked, a policy which may cost as much as $400 million additional next year, we too were handicapped by certain attitudes and policies of our friends. He referred in this connection particularly to support of the USSR and of India as UN-designated members of the political conference. He touched upon the question of the admission of Communist China to the UN—a question upon which the U.S. position must, for the present, be an adamant negative. He asked M. Daridan to reflect on these matters and their bearing upon the Administration's efforts to secure popular and Congressional support in solving the budgetary problems of our friends at the expense of increasing our own deficit.

751G.00/8–1953

The Chief of the Mutual Security Agency Mission in France (Labouisse) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)

TOP SECRET PARIS, August 19, 1953.

DEAR LIVIE: On the eve of my departure on leave, I want to send you a few personal impressions and cautions concerning the Indo-Chinese situation. This is probably unnecessary, but I shall be happier after I have set out certain of the factors which I believe should be taken into consideration by Washington in determining our policies and actions in this field. I shall leave a copy of this letter for the Ambassador's information upon his return next week. He may or may not agree, and, in the latter event, will doubtless so inform you.

The points I want particularly to stress are, in effect, an expansion of the "word of caution" contained in the last paragraph of Embassy telegram 285 of July 22.[1] For some time I have felt real concern that the Indo-Chinese problem would end up in our lap. The reasons underlying my concern may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. It has been obvious for many months that the French could not carry on, even at the current level, the Indo-Chinese operations without American budgetary support comparable to that granted by us during the last two years. It has also been obvious that there is no likelihood of a successful conclusion to the Indo-Chinese operations if only the current level of effort and expenditure is maintained.

2. The first time that the facts were really aired publicly in France, and the French limitations of action more or less understood by all concerned, was during the Mendès-France investiture debate. It was apparent at that time that a large part of the French Assembly, and I believe indirectly the French public, concluded that things could not continue on as at present. The Mendès-France line was that France could not afford to continue indefinitely the expenditures in Indo-China and hope to build and sustain a sufficiently strong economy at home. He also apparently believed that a continuation of substantial U.S. aid was not the answer and that, in fact, it enabled France to put off taking certain necessary internal measures so desperately needed. The failure of France to achieve sufficient economic and financial strength and stability at home, when coupled in his mind with a coming inevitable "political catastrophe" in the Associated States, led him to favor some type of early negotiations which would enable France to withdraw gradually from Indo-China without yielding too much to Ho Chi Minh. (There is and was, of course, serious doubt in many minds here that a negotiation at this time could satisfactorily protect our common objectives in the area. American official opinion considers negotiations are impossible under present conditions.) I believe that the foregoing is a reasonably fair exposition of Mendès-France's position. I have stressed his position because he has had a very important influence in the recent development of French thinking on this subject.

3. It is my personal opinion that few, if any, French leaders now believe that a real and clear-cut military victory is possible in Indo-China. Even those leaders who are opposed to the idea of a negotiated settlement do not, to my mind, have a very specific idea as to how to bring about a successful conclusion to the war. They all recognize, of course, that substantial aid will be needed if there is to be a chance of success. My belief is that even when political leaders think of a "successful" or "satisfactory" conclusion to the matter, they are now thinking in terms of developing sufficient military strength on the part of the Associated States forces to provide a basis for an eventual progressive withdrawal of French Union forces after a period of some eighteen months to two years—and even then probably on some negotiated basis.

4. Although some members of the Laniel government would doubtless like an early reduction in the French commitments in Indo-China, I believe that Laniel and his government as a whole wish to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion, most probably within a framework similar to that suggested at the end of the preceding paragraph.

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[1] *Ante*, p. 693.

Laniel's government has indicated a strong intention of doing all it can afford, materially and politically, to that end. Laniel, however, has indicated that substantial further financial aid from the U.S. will be necessary, above the $485 million currently contemplated. His government has for some time now been trying to work out a specific program to submit to us.

5. We have not, up to this moment, received anything very concrete from the French. I hope and expect that something will be forthcoming today or tomorrow. But even if it does, and even if the dimensions of the additional financial aid requested prove to be within the realm of U.S. possibilities, it is here that my real concern commences—as I shall try to outline in the following paragraphs.

6. The approach which the French make to us may well be to say that France can no longer afford to finance the operations and buildup of the forces of the Associated States, and to suggest that we take over this expenditure. See paragraph 4 of Embassy telegram 572 of August 13.[2]

7. The probability contemplated in paragraph 6 above must be related to the fact that the French have already granted the Associated States a very large degree of independence. It appears to me that the government is now prepared to go about as far in this direction as the individual Associated States wish.

8. The obvious move on the French side under these circumstances is for them to suggest (as intimated by Reynaud on July 22—see paragraph 6 of Embassy telegram 285) that our assistance to the Associated States forces (under paragraph 6 above) be arranged directly with the Associated States, thus leaving the support and equipping of all indigenous Indo-China forces to us. At this point we will have taken a really firm hold on the bear's tail along with the French. (In this connection, I have received some very definite indications from a responsible French official that this latter objective is an important element in French thinking.)

9. It is not difficult to foresee that from this rather vulnerable position, we may end up being the sole possessor of the bear. For example:

> (*a*) Even with the Laniel government in power, increasing public pressures may develop within France for a reduction of French Union forces committed to Indo-China, which would make not only the contemplated increase in those forces impossible, but could well force a reduction. Such a development does not appear to me to be at all out of the question, particularly so long as the truce reigns in Korea. This development will be fostered by the lack of belief in a military victory (see paragraph 3 above) and by the current very unstable domestic situation. As an indication of the French government's concern in the matter, their plans to move new troops out to Indo-China are being laid in the utmost secrecy.

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[2] Telegram 572 from Paris, Aug. 13, not printed, reported the discussion that day between Labouisse and Marc Jacquet, Secretary of State for the Associated States, regarding French aid requirements for Indochina. Paragraph 4 indicated that the United States would apparently be asked to provide financing to cover full costs of the national armies in excess of what the Associated States themselves could contribute. (751G.5 MSP/8-1353)

(*b*) The Laniel government could well fall during the coming months and a new government, desirous of an early French withdrawal from Indo-China, take over.

(*c*) The possibilities envisaged in (*a*) and (*b*) could be aggravated by developments in Morocco and the other territories of North Africa which would make the continued—much less an increased—use of French forces in Indo-China (particularly the troops recruited in the North African area) more and more difficult.

(*d*) The possibilities of a real and thorough-going general strike in France during the fall months may well serve to increase the above possibilities.

Under any such circumstances, our position would not be an enviable one. If the French, for some such reason as suggested above, loosen their hold and reduce their forces committed to Indo-China, the least we could expect would be to be faced with a Greek-1947-type situation. The worst, of course, would directly pose the question of the employment of U.S. troops.

Our increasing involvement in Indo-China is, to my mind, not simply a question of some additional financial or end-item aid. We must view the situation with an eye toward the very real possibility that we will end up shouldering full responsibilities—the deeper our involvement at this time, the greater the difficulty of our position if a real French retrenchment ensues. We could, in such event, well be faced with the dilemma of employing U.S. troops or of the U.S. being charged with the responsibility of letting the Indo-Chinese bastion go down the drain. (I fully realize that in the eventualities under discussion, the responsibility would not be solely ours—and, in fact, would be primarily France's. However, Communist propaganda would not fail to point out U.S. unreliability, etc.)

I mention the above concerns to you largely because I believe that the most careful consideration should be given by the U.S. policymakers in the coming weeks to the possibilities envisaged above, and that these unpleasant possibilities should be evaluated in terms of our security interests in Southeast Asia and of other possible alternative courses of action.

All of the foregoing is, of course, without reckoning with possible Chinese moves. That is another subject. I merely wanted to point out some of the problems that could stem from the situation in France.

I shall be in New York on September 2d and will telephone to you to inquire whether you consider it would be useful for me to come down to Washington. In my absence from Paris, my part in this matter will be carried on by Lane Timmons[3] and Don McGrew, working, of course, in close association with Ted Achilles [4] and Phil Sprouse, and with the Ambassador on his return.

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[3] Deputy Chief of the MSA Mission in France.

My best wishes to you.

Sincerely yours, HARRY

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[4] The following handwritten notation by Theodore C. Achilles, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy in France, appears on the last page of the source text:

"This is not a pleasant picture but I think it is an accurate one and that Harry has given it in good perspective."

751G.5/8–1953 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, August 19, 1953—8 p. m.

647. Distribution as directed by Secretary's office. Re: Embtel 572, August 13.[1]

1. Jacquet gave Labouisse this afternoon promised data re French 1954 program for Indochina, consisting short covering memorandum and three annexes. These documents being translated soonest and will be transmitted Department by air despatch, together with three tables referred to paragraph 2 reference telegram.[2]

2. Estimate for total cost Associated States forces in CY 1954 is given as 195 billion francs. French hope Associated States will agree increase their financial contribution from 3.2 billion piasters in 1953 to 6 billion piasters (60 billion francs) in 1954, thus leaving estimated gap next year of 135 billion francs. Jacquet stressed that in his opinion this is minimum figure, particularly since no understanding yet exists with Associated States re their 1954 contribution, and suggested gap might well reach 150 billion francs (which would imply Associated States contribution of 4.5 billion piasters or 45 billion francs).

3. Covering memorandum concludes with following comment regarding 195 billion franc program for ASIC build-up in 1954:

Begin translation. In order to put this plan into effect and at same time limit French military expenditures in Indochina to a level roughly compatible with France's capabilities and her obligations in Europe, one possible formula would be for United States Government to relieve France of the burden of the external financial aid required Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to build-up their national military forces.

This would imply that while maintaining the aid provided in favor of the French military budget in 1954 in application of April 26 memorandum,[3] United States Government would agree, in addition, to contribute to financing of the military efforts of the Associated

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[1] See footnote 2, *supra*.

[2] The documents were transmitted in despatch 589 from Paris, Aug. 20, *infra*.

[3] See footnote 2, p. 507.

States through assistance in a form to be worked out subsequently and in an amount of 135 billion francs ($385 million) as estimated in documents annexed to this memorandum. *End translation.*

4. Third annex indicates 135 billion franc figure exclusive any end-item aid.

5. We have not yet had opportunity analyze data received today, but on first reading obvious there are major deficiencies. Memorandum contains nothing on French strategy and tactics Indochina, nor on French 1954 NATO expenditures and force goals. In response our questions Jacquet said French Government hoped maintain Lisbon commitments, but that it is "too soon" to be able say anything firm on this point. We are not at all certain that Pleven yet fully acquainted with plans upon which memorandum and annexes based.

6. We are proceeding analyze data received and will then discuss with French the additional information that will be required. In addition to guidance provided Department telegrams 461, August 12 and 545, August 18,[4] we would appreciate your further comments as soon as you have considered data being pouched.

DILLON

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[4] In telegram 461 to Paris, Aug. 12, the Department of State indicated that the French should provide not only costing data for 1954, but also an explanation of their intentions regarding implementation of the Navarre Plan. (751G.5/8-1153) Telegram 545 of Aug. 18 quoted the operative portion of NSC Action No. 874 of Aug. 6 (p. 718) and stated that a general memorandum describing the strategy and tactics contemplated by the French in Indochina would serve as the primary basis for an evaluation of the feasibility of the French program. (751G.5 MSP/8-1353)

751G.5/8-2053 : Despatch

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, August 20, 1953.

No. 589

Ref: Embtel 647, August 19, 1953.[1]

Subject: French 1954 Program for Indo-China

Distribution as directed by the Secretary's office.

1. As promised in the reference telegram, the Embassy is transmitting as enclosures to this despatch the following documents relating to the French 1954 program for Indo-China,[2] which have been handed to Mr. Labouisse by Mr. Marc Jacquet, Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Office in charge of Associated States Affairs:

(*a*) Memorandum of August 18, 1953 summarizing recent developments in the Indo-Chinese situation and proposing a joint Franco-

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[1] *Supra.*

[2] The enclosures are not printed.

American examination of the Indo-Chinese problem in the light of these developments, in order to determine the additional measures which might be taken by the two Governments with a view to putting into effect a program calculated to produce a solution within a reasonable period of time (Enclosure No. 1). The following three documents are annexed to that memorandum:

(1) Expenditures for the War in Indo-China during the French Fiscal Year 1953 (Enclosure No. 2).

(2) Expenditures for the War in Indo-China during the French Fiscal Year 1954 (Enclosure No. 3).

(3) Detailed Estimates of the Military Expenditures for the Armies of the Associated States in 1954 (Enclosure No. 4).

(*b*) Table entitled "Plan for the Build-up of the National Armies of the Associated States (I. Ground Forces)" (Enclosure No. 5).

(*c*) Table entitled "Plan for the Build-up of the National Armies of the Associated States (II. *Gendarmerie*, Vietnamese Air Force and Navy, and French Cadres)" (Enclosure No. 6).

(*d*) Table entitled "Evolution of the Force Build-up of the National Armies of the Associated States During the First-Half of 1953 (Forces in Being)" (Enclosure No. 7).

2. In handing us the enclosed memorandum, Mr. Jacquet emphasized that it was a coordinated presentation, embodying not only his own views and those of Prime Minister Laniel but also those of the other French Ministers concerned. He further said that it was based upon the most recent estimates received from Saigon, but that particularly in the case of 1953 it had not been possible to calculate with any degree of firmness the effects upon the level of expenditure of such elements as the devaluation of the piaster, the operations in Laos, and the first phase of the Navarre Plan. Thus the definitive picture for 1953 would probably not be available until early in 1954 after the close of the regular period of the 1953 fiscal year.

3. Mr. Jacquet referred to the estimated gap of 135 billion francs ($385 million), as shown by the enclosed documents, in financing for the 1954 force build-up of the National Armies of the Associated States, and stated that he considered this to be a minimum figure. In addition to the difficulties of forecasting expenditures as far in advance as 15 or 16 months, it should be borne in mind that the estimate is predicated on the assumption that the combined defense contribution of the Associated States from their own resources will rise from 3.2 billion piasters (32 billion francs) in 1953 to 6.0 billion piasters (60 billion francs) in 1954. While the French Government believes that this estimate is a reasonable one and intends to urge the Associated States to accept a commitment of this magnitude, no understanding yet exists with them on this point. The previous figure of 150 billion francs (about $430 million) mentioned to Ambassador Dillon by Prime Minister Laniel was based upon the assumption of an Asso-

ciated States contribution of 4.5 billion piasters (45 billion francs), and in the end this may prove to be a more realistic figure.

4. Mr. Jacquet said that Bao Dai was prepared to carry out the program described in the enclosed memorandum for the build-up of the Vietnamese forces by seeing to it that the necessary manpower was available as needed. Indeed, the decrees providing for the calling up of the required numbers of men had already been prepared, and their issuance was only waiting upon the reorganization of the Vietnamese Government which Bao Dai was now in the process of carrying out. Undoubtedly the signature and promulgation of the decrees would be one of the first acts of the new Government, which was expected to be formed in the early part of September. Of course, Mr. Jacquet stressed, it would be of no use for the Vietnamese to go ahead with the calling up of draftees, if there were no means available for training and equipping them. Accordingly, Bao Dai would certainly not proceed with his plans unless and until some satisfactory arrangement could be worked out with respect to the problem raised in the enclosed memorandum of how to finance the 1954 build-up of the National Armies.

5. After scanning the memorandum and the annexed documents, the Embassy representatives referred to the fact that no mention was made therein of the relationship between the 1954 plans for Indo-China and French 1954 NATO expenditures and force goals. Mr. Jacquet replied that it was "too soon" for the French Government to be able to say anything firm on this point, although it was their intention to maintain the Lisbon commitments. It was their hope that the nine battalions which had been promised to General Navarre could be found by certain switches among the forces stationed in France, Germany and North Africa without compromising the NATO goals.

6. The Embassy representatives observed that the memorandum was silent on the requirements for the build-up of the National Armies during the period after 1954, and inquired whether the problem of financing this program in 1955 might not be even more acute than in 1954, given the fact that the level of Associated States forces in being at the beginning of the period would be considerably higher in the second year. In other words, was it contemplated that there would be a financial gap in 1955 comparable to the gap now estimated for 1954, for which United States assistance would be sought? Mr. Jacquet replied by saying that he thought it was important not to make an arbitrary separation of the costs of the National Armies from the costs to France of maintaining French Union forces in Indo-China. What was significant for France was the total expenditure for both of these items (not of the financial contribution of the Associated States). In 1954 that estimated total was greatly in excess of what France was

capable of carrying herself, and this was the reason for requesting from the United States additional aid (over that specified in the April 26 memorandum).[3] However, Mr. Jacquet said, if the program which the French worked out can be realized in 1954, it will be possible by the end of that year to replace a part of the French Union troops now stationed in Indo-China with Associated States forces. This means that the expenditures for the French Expeditionary Corps will decrease in 1955 and that the overall costs of the Indo-Chinese war may decrease as well, since the relatively well paid professional soldiers of the French Expeditionary Corps will be relieved by Associated States forces composed of less costly draftees. The Embassy representatives inquired whether this meant that France would be prepared to make available as assistance to the Associated States in 1955 any savings realized on the costs of the Expeditionary Corps as compared to the previous year. Mr. Jacquet replied that he was, of course, not in a position at the present time to state what the intentions of the French Government would be in 1955. The question of financing the Indo-Chinese effort for that year would have to be examined at a later time when the various elements likely to affect the situation in 1955 could be foreseen with greater clarity than at the present time. However, he felt that his point about the total cost of the Indo-Chinese war was relevant and should not be lost sight of in connection with the question we had raised.

7. With reference to the three tables on the program for the build-up of the Associated States forces, which were handed to Mr. Labouisse by Mr. Jacquet at their meeting of August 13 (See Embtel 572 August 13),[4] the following observations may be made: The schedule for the activation of forces is contained in the two tables entitled "Plan for the Build-up of the National Armies of the Associated States," the one table relating to ground forces and the other table to all other units (*Gendarmerie*, Vietnamese Air Force and Navy, and French cadres). Thus, in order to obtain a complete picture of the planned force build-up, the totals shown in the two tables must be added together. The third table shows the actual progress made through June 1, 1953 in the realization of the plan for the build-up of the Associated States ground forces.

8. As stated in the reference telegram, our preliminary examination of the material received indicates that it has certain major deficiencies. For example, in addition to the failure of the memorandum, as noted above, to discuss the relation of the Indo-Chinese problem to French 1954 NATO expenditures and force goals or the outlook regarding the build-up of the National Armies in the period after

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[3] See footnote 2, p. 507.

[4] See footnote 2, p. 729.

1954, it contains no exposition of French strategy and tactics in Indo-China. We are proceeding to a full analysis of the data received and will then discuss with the French the additional information that will be required. We will of course use as guidance in this connection the points contained in Deptels 461 of August 12 and 545 of August 18.[5] We would appreciate receiving any further comments which you may have as soon as you have had an opportunity to examine the material enclosed herewith.

For the Ambassador:
B. E. L. TIMMONS
Acting for the Minister for Economic Affairs

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[5] See footnote 4, *supra*.

751G.5/8–2453 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, August 24, 1953—8 p. m.

641. Memo conversation August 14[2] between Under Secretary, Bonsal and Daridan pouched you. In any conversation you may have with Laniel or Bidault in next few days, you may wish discuss two items contained above-mentioned memo.

First pertains additional aid, subject on which our dealings heretofore have been in first instance with Laniel, also Bidault and Jacquet. Daridan, under instructions Schumann, asked when US would be position make definite commitment, apparently unaware US has been waiting for data from French. Under Secretary replied we hope receive shortly info promised by French and required by us. Said he hoped final presentation NSC could be made week August 24 to obtain definitive approval policy additional aid to which preliminary approval has already been given; for this purpose needed from Defense final and favorable judgment military elements Navarre Plan and from Stassen similar evaluation cost factors.

Therefore, French through Daridan informed preliminary approval. However, there should be no misunderstanding final approval awaits two evaluations based data to be furnished by French.

Second, Daridan on behalf Schumann sought US views possibility US and UK would at Korean Political Conference support French attempt find some basis terminating hostilities Indochina through negotiation. Under Secretary replied emphatically that we can at this time make no commitment enlarge agenda Korean Political Conference to which Daridan expressed disappointment, claiming our "present position even more negative than that described by Secretary to Bidault in July." He then asked whether, if French at conference developed on own initiative promising prospect negotiation on Indochina, US would support such initiative. Under Secretary replied he could not, at this time, give any indication what our attitude might be, to which Daridan again expressed disappointment.

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[1] Drafted by William D. Fisher of the Office of Western European Affairs.
[2] *Ante*, p. 725.

Appears Foreign Office may have misunderstood US position. In July tripartite meeting (Deptel 158)[3] Secretary in reply Bidault noted difficulty attempting discuss Indochina at Korea conference, stated preferable remain alert and seize whatever opportunity might come along seek solution Indochina problem. In reply Salisbury observations, Bidault indicated understanding undesirability negotiating from weakness (which point had been stressed at length by Secretary in Bidault talk with French July 12)[4] said new French plans did call for regaining initiative. On July 31 Bonnet left *aide-mémoire* with Secretary[5] (copy being pouched) in which French proposed several possibilities discussion Indochina during Korean conference, which Secretary described as impracticable except for proposal for "parallel" conference having no tie to UN which Secretary described as "might be feasible". Department noted thereafter that AFP August 4 carried item "Today Washington suggests that a special conference be called by France and considers that it could take place parallel to that on Korea." If this represented Foreign Office interpretation Secretary's comment on French *aide-mémoire* and Secretary's prior remarks to Bidault, as is indicated by Daridan's approach to Under Secretary, Embassy should take steps assure complete understanding.

Although US would not refuse examine any situation which French might present to us, US has made no commitments regarding support for bringing up Indochina at time Korean conference and very skeptical possibilities achieving anything in negotiations at least until implementation Navarre Plan develops present situation of weakness into one of strength. Entire basis our favorable consideration French request for very substantial additional aid is that French plan seek military victory in framework political progress in Indochina and are not concurrently seeking any negotiated agreement for termination hostilities.[6]

DULLES

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[3] Telegram 158 to Paris, July 14, summarizing the U.S.-French meeting of July 13, is not printed. For the record of that meeting, see p. 669.

[4] For the record of the meeting of July 12, see p. 656.

[5] See footnote 3, p. 709.

[6] In telegram 746 from Paris, Aug. 25, Theodore C. Achilles, the Deputy Chief of Mission, reported that he had raised the subject with Premier Laniel that afternoon. Laniel had stated that he was determined that there would be no negotiations until France was in a position to negotiate from strength. He had expressed the desire to discuss the matter personally with Ambassador Dillon in the immediate future. (751G.5 MSP/8-2553)

751G.00/8–2553 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, August 25, 1953—7 p. m.

334. No distribution outside Department. Personal for Philip Bonsal from Heath. Trapnell tells me that according available intelligence French command thinks it unlikely that Viet Minh will try another invasion in Laos present time and the fact that all Viet Minh divisions are close around Tonkin Delta leads it to believe that there might be an early offensive against Delta. To meet such an offensive, the French have in addition to their static units, a mobile reserve of 18 battalions plus 10 parachute battalions.

Trapnell does not believe French have any plan to undertake any sizeable offensive operation beyond the five limited operations of which Langson (very successful) and Phan Thiet and North Annam (not very successful) were the first three items.

This telegram marked "No distribution" since understood Trapnell reporting direct JCS.

HEATH

751G.5/8–2053 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

TOP SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, August 26, 1953—7 : 02 p. m.

671. For Ambassador. Embassy despatch 589 [2] received yesterday most disappointing since it does not provide adequate information for US to formulate a position re additional aid. While fully appreciating primary concern Laniel Government in past three weeks has been French strikes, we had understood from his conversations with you and MacArthur that Indochina problem was of greatest urgency, that additional US assistance soonest for Indochina was essential part of his over-all program, and that full information would be supplied by about August 7. Almost one month has elapsed since these talks and now information which finally furnished is inadequate to enable us make judgment. This delay gives us serious concern not only because dry season is rapidly approaching in Indochina and French reinforcements are obviously needed there, but also because we had hoped and still hope US-French agreement could have been reached late August or early September so reinforcements could be on move to Indochina by October 1, which Pleven in late July indicated to General Gruenther as tentative target date for departure. Obviously speed with

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[1] Drafted by Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Department. Repeated to Saigon for information as telegram 321.

[2] Dated Aug. 20, p. 732.

which French move reinforcements to Indochina will have important bearing on their ability deal with expected Vietminh attack and will have important bearing on our judgment as to degree of success French may expect in implementing Navarre Plan. Furthermore, announcement by French and commencement of actual movement of reinforcements from France to Indochina prior to reconvening of Assembly seems obviously most desirable in view of fact Laniel's program for Indochina will not be popular with either public or Parliament.

We had also hoped meet Laniel's desire to make early visit to US and see President. For your information only, on August 3 we discussed this possibility with President and he agreed in principle to such visit if French program judged satisfactory.[3] We had hoped might occur late August or early September.

In separate telegrams we are sending you questions re French plan, reflecting coordination with Defense and FOA.[4] Understand you are arranging appointment with Laniel, August 28 and urge you explain to him that while we sincerely desire assist French substantially in cleaning up Indochina, delays in receiving information are creating serious complications for us. In particular, we must know when French intend begin movement of troops to Indochina and when they will arrive there. We therefore trust he will give his personal attention to seeing that we get answers to questions soonest so that US can reach decision. Must have info by morning September first if NSC is to act next week. Otherwise action will be delayed to September 10 which would make mid-September visit improbable. If he still desires visit US and see President prior to reconvening Parliament you may, speaking personally and not for US Government, tell him that if necessary information is forthcoming and if US finds French program satisfactory, you believe it might be possible for him to visit Washington about mid-September and you would be glad to recommend such visit at that time. Although we have not yet discussed mid-September visit with President we believe it would be possible and would strongly recommend it if French program satisfactory and if Laniel could come then. We are certain in considering usefulness of trip Laniel will carefully weigh French public opinion reactions. We have specially in mind old line of "French blood bought with US dollars" and other psychological considerations which might relate to trip immediately after strikes. These remarks are not intended to discourage Laniel but merely to make sure disadvantages as well as advantages will be carefully considered. You might also tell him you know President's schedule for latter part September and early October is already so very full with visit of Panama President and other long-standing engagements that you doubt feasibility of visit then.

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[3] According to the log of the President's appointments for Aug. 3, he met with Under Secretary Smith and Counselor MacArthur on that morning. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments") No record of the meeting has been found.

[4] In telegram 672 to Paris, Aug. 26, the Department transmitted questions regarding specific costs and requirements of the French program. (751G.5/8–2053) Telegram 673 of the same date, reflecting discussions with the Department of Defense, contained requests for additional information on French military strategy and plans for sending reinforcements to Indochina. (751G.5/8–2553)

In telegram 799 from Paris, Aug. 28, Ambassador Dillon reported that Embassy officials had transmitted a memorandum based on Department telegrams 672 and 673 to Marc Jacquet, French Secretary of State for the Associated States, on Aug. 27. Jacquet expressed the hope that his government could reply by Sept. 1. (751G.5/8–2853) The Embassy sent the text of the memorandum to Washington in telegram 868 of Sept. 2. (751G.5/9–253) Prior to receipt of Department telegrams 671, 672, and 673 on Aug. 26, the Embassy had also requested additional information on the French program in a memorandum delivered to Jacquet on Aug. 25. The text of that earlier memorandum is contained in telegram 869 from Paris, Sept. 2. (751G.5/9–253)

DULLES

751G.5/8–2953 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, August 29, 1953—1 p. m.

819. Limit distribution. Re Deptels 671, August 26[1] and 683, August 27.[2] I returned to Paris today and at Laniel's invitation I dined alone with him. He appeared considerably sobered and somewhat discouraged at the situation revealed by the strikes. He feels that the government was successful in handling the situation but that the strikes showed the deep feeling of malaise in the French economy. Therefore he feels that it is urgent that he be enabled to announce his new budget in general terms as promptly as possible. Further economies which he intends to make in the civilian sector depend on his ability to make economies in the military budget which in turn depends on what the United States is prepared to do to help him in Indochina. Therefore, for his own domestic political reasons he is most anxious to come to a rapid decision on Indochina. I told him that we were very favorably disposed but that we required certain additional information which Jacquet is preparing (Embtel 799).[3]

I told him that the sooner we received that information the better and that in any event we were most anxious to come to a decision at the NSC meeting scheduled for September 10. He had not yet had opportunity to be fully informed by Jacquet concerning our requests for additional information but said that he was seeing Jacquet tomorrow morning and would tell him that it was of top urgency for the

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[1] *Supra.*

[2] In telegram 683 to Paris, Aug. 27, not printed, the Department instructed Ambassador Dillon to raise with Premier Laniel certain deficiencies in French organizational and training efforts in Indochina which the Department of Defense believed to exist. (751G.5 MSP/8–2753)

[3] See footnote 4, *supra.*

United States to get the information it desired during the course of the coming week.

As to the Navarre Plan he said the decision to send out the 9 additional battalions was definite provided of course the funds were available from the United States to carry out the rest of the plan, i.e., the creation of the necessary additional Associated States forces. This is same position he took in talks with me and MacArthur the end of last month. The additional troops will not be sent unless France is assured of adequate assistance from the United States to create the necessary local forces.[4] We could of course predicate the granting of such additional assistance on the actual arrival of the 9 additional battalions in Indochina. I personally feel that this is the way the matter should be handled.

We talked to some extent about the possible economies in the French European defense establishment. Laniel has not yet received definite figures from Pleven but hopes to have such figures next week. The French NATO forces will be kept at least at the levels foreseen for the end of 1953. The total economies possible in these forces now appear to be more in the order of 50 billion francs than the 100 billion francs Laniel mentioned to me in July.

I mentioned the items described in Deptel 683 and Laniel was uninformed about them. He said that he would make inquiries about the training of senior Vietnamese officers which he felt to be most important.

He was encouraged by the meeting he had today with Bao Dai. He said he had received a much better impression of Bao Dai than he had expected. Bao Dai was hopeful and thought that victory was possible in 12 to 18 months. Bao Dai said he was prepared to call up the necessary manpower to create 85 to 100 new battalions in 1954.

Laniel said in conclusion that he felt that the Viet Minh were now at the peak of their power and on the way down. He was confident of victory in a fairly short period of time if the funds were available. France must end her commitments in Indochina very soon and the Navarre Plan was the only way to do this with honor. I told him we would give him an answer promptly as soon as we received the necessary additional information from Jacquet.

Hughes and Martin have been and will continue to be kept fully informed on situation.

DILLON

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[4] In telegram 824 from Paris, Aug. 30, Ambassador Dillon reported that Jacquet had again stated that the French decision to send nine additional battalions to Indochina was unconditional. The movement of troops would commence in mid-October. The French Government saw no possibility, however, of continuing this extra effort beyond April 1954, unless additional aid from the United States were forthcoming. The reinforcements were being dispatched on a temporary basis, pending the outcome of the ongoing aid discussions. (751G.5/8-3053)

751G.5 MSP/8-3153

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs (Nolting) [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] August 31, 1953.

Subject: Additional Financing for Indochina
Question of Morocco

Participants: M. Bonnet, French Ambassador
General Smith, Under Secretary of State
Mr. MacArthur, Counselor
Mr. Nolting, S/MSA

Before departing for Paris today, Ambassador Bonnet called on General Smith concerning additional Indochina financing. The Under Secretary informed him that if the French program was satisfactory, the President has in principle decided to help France mount additional military effort in Indochina by additional US financing; that, subject to receipt by us from the French of additional information requested and subject to approval of a military plan by our military authorities, we are prepared to move rapidly to give Laniel the assurances he will need to present to the French Assembly; that the order of magnitude of additional financing is $400 million maximum, preferably less as foreign aid funds are very tight. The Under Secretary said we are not yet certain whether all of this amount can be taken from presently appropriated funds, i.e., whether a request to Congress for a supplemental appropriation may be necessary. He assured Ambassador Bonnet, however, that if a firm decision is taken by the US Government to help in a specified amount, the French can rely upon our making good on that decision.

The Under Secretary stressed the urgent need to accelerate additional effort in Indochina, both in terms of the dispatch of additional French battalions and the creation of additional native forces, in order to create a psychology of victory in France, in Indochina, and in the US. Regarding a possible visit by Premier Laniel to the United States, the Under Secretary said he realized that Laniel had many urgent problems in France and that such a visit was not essential to reaching an agreement with the French.

The French Ambassador thanked the Under Secretary for the above information and said he would convey it to Laniel immediately upon his arrival in Paris, and that he would do what he could to expedite the additional information that the US requires.

[Here follows a brief account of discussion on the question of Morocco.]

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[1] The first two paragraphs of this memorandum were transmitted to Paris as telegram 735 (telegram 343 to Saigon), Aug. 31. (751G.00/8-3153)

Reverting to the Indochina problem, General Smith told the Ambassador that the Secretary was planning to make a reference in his speech of September 2 to the American Legion which he thought would help the French Government. This reference was to the effect that the political conference on Korea, if successful in its primary purpose, might lead to a settlement of other issues, including Southeast Asia, if the Communists so desire.[2] Ambassador Bonnet said that such a reference would be helpful to Laniel, in that it would cut the ground from under some of his opponents who maintain that the US is unwilling to have the French come to a settlement on any reasonable terms. He added, however, that he thought there was little possibility of arriving at an acceptable settlement of the Indochina affair until a position of military superiority had clearly been established by our side.

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[2] For the pertinent portion of the speech by Secretary Dulles to the American Legion at St. Louis on Sept. 2, see editorial note, p. 747.

751G.5/9–253

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Nash) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, September 2, 1953.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: Reference is made to a letter to you dated 24 April 1953[1] with which was forwarded a memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning the proposed French Strategic Plan (Letourneau–Allard) for the successful conclusion of the war in Indo-China. Certain weaknesses in the subject plan were listed in the Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum such as an apparent lack of aggressiveness, inadequate organizational and tactical concepts, and a failure to give sufficient consideration to the development of indigenous leaders. The Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that although they believed the plan to be workable they considered that it could be improved considerably. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, therefore, recommended that as much pressure as was feasible should be placed on the French from the political point of view to obtain a clear-cut commitment to overcome at least to some extent the listed deficiencies.

The plan presented by the French Command[er] in Indo-China, General Navarre, to General John W. O'Daniel, appears to overcome most of the objections to the Letourneau–Allard plan. In brief the Navarre plan calls for: (*a*) taking the initiative immediately with local offensives, emphasizing guerrilla warfare, (*b*) initiating an offensive (utilizing the equivalent of three (3) divisions) in Tonkin by 15 September 1953, (*c*) recovering a maximum number of units from areas not directly involved in the war, (*d*) reorganizing battalions into regiments and regiments into divisions, with necessary supporting units and (*e*) developing the Armies of the Associated States and giving them greater leadership responsibility in the conduct of operations.

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[1] *Ante*, p. 493.

There is attached for your information a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, dated 28 August 1953, which states that the present Navarre concept appears to correct the previously indicated weaknesses and from their viewpoint presents a marked improvement in French military thinking concerning operations in Indo-China. Of course, the actual success of the operations in Indo-China will be dependent upon the aggressiveness and skill with which the French and Vietnamese forces conduct their future operations. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe, as does the Secretary of Defense, that the necessary support should be provided to permit full and vigorous implementation of the Navarre concept, conditioned upon continued implementation of French support, demonstration of French intent by actual performance in Indo-China, and continued French willingness to receive and act upon U.S. military advice. Further, the French should be urged at all levels to support and vigorously prosecute the Navarre concept to the maximum extent of their capabilities.

Sincerely yours,

FRANK C. NASH

[Enclosure]

Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)[2]

TOP SECRET

WASHINGTON, 28 August 1953.

Subject: The Navarre Concept for Operations in Indochina.

1. In a memorandum for you, dated 21 April 1953,[3] subject: "Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina," the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out certain weaknesses in the LeTourneau–Allard plan, but felt that it was workable. During the visit of the U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, Lieutenant General Navarre submitted in writing to Lieutenant General O'Daniel, Chief of the Mission, a paper entitled "Principles for

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[2] This memorandum is a revision of a paper, same title, submitted to the Secretary of Defense by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Aug. 11; for text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 134–137. A memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary Wilson dated Aug. 28 explained the necessity for the modification of the Aug. 11 paper, which had been more optimistic than the memorandum printed here with regard to the prospects for the success of the Navarre Plan; for text, see *ibid.*, pp. 138–139.

[3] *Ante*, p. 493.

the Conduct of the War in Indochina" appended hereto, which appears to correct these weaknesses and which presents a marked improvement in French military thinking concerning operations in Indochina.

2. In his report Lieutenant General O'Daniel stated that, in his opinion, the new French command in Indochina will accomplish under the Navarre concept the decisive defeat of the Viet Minh by 1955 and that the addition of two or more French divisions from outside of Indochina would expedite this defeat. Additions other than in divisional organization would be in error since it is the divisional team, with its combat proven effectiveness, which is sorely needed in Indochina. Lieutenant General O'Daniel further reported that French military leaders were most cooperative with the mission, that several agreements were accomplished to improve the effectiveness of the proposed military operations, and that repeated invitations were extended to the U.S. mission to return in a few months to witness the progress the French will have made.

3. Based on past performances by the French, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have reservations in predicting actual results which can be expected pending additional proof by demonstration of continued French support and by further French performance in Indochina. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that a basic requirement for military success in Indochina is one of creating a political climate in that country which will provide the incentive for natives to support the French and supply them with adequate intelligence which is vital to the successful conduct of operations in Indochina. If this is accomplished and if the Navarre concept is vigorously pursued militarily in Indochina and given wholehearted political support in France, it does offer a promise of military success sufficient to warrant appropriate additional U.S. aid required to assist. U.S. support of the Navarre concept should be based on needs of the French Union Forces in Indochina for additional equipment necessary to implement the organization of the "Battle Corps" envisaged by the Navarre concept and necessary support of the planned expansion of indigenous forces, such needs to be screened by the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina. In addition, to improve the chances of success, this support should include continued close liaison and coordination with French military authorities together with friendly but firm encouragement and advice where indicated.

4. In furtherance of the O'Daniel Mission the Joint Chiefs of Staff are receiving Progress Reports from Indochina. Information received from Indochina indicates the French are not pursuing agreements reached between General O'Daniel and General Navarre (including the Navarre concept) as vigorously as expected by General O'Daniel

and as contemplated by him in his report. Progress reports state that (*a*) the French have "no plans for a general fall offensive beyond limited objective operations designed to keep the enemy off balance", (*b*) reorganization into regiments and division-size units "is still in the planning stages", (*c*) there is "no sense of urgency in the training of senior Vietnamese commanders and staff officers", (*d*) the organization of a training command is awaiting the solution of "political problems" and (*e*) the "organization of the amphibious plan has not gone beyond the planning stages".

5. In light of the apparent slowness of the French in following up the Navarre concept and other agreements reached between General Navarre and General O'Daniel, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that additional U.S. support should be conditioned upon continued implementation of French support, demonstration of French intent by actual performance in Indochina, and continued French willingness to receive and act upon U.S. military advice. Further, the French should be urged at all levels to support and vigorously prosecute the Navarre concept to the maximum extent of their capabilities.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
ARTHUR RADFORD
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Appendix

PRINCIPLES AS STATED BY GENERAL NAVARRE FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR IN INDOCHINA

I.—To retake the initiative immediately through the carrying out, beginning this summer, of local offensives and by pushing to the utmost commando and guerrilla actions.

II.—To take the offensive in the north beginning September 15, in order to forestall the enemy attack. To conduct the battle which will take place during the fall and winter of 1953–1954 in an offensive manner by attacking the flanks and the rear of the enemy.

III.—To recover from areas not directly involved in the battle a maximum number of units. To pacify these regions progressively.

IV.—To build up progressively a battle corps by grouping battalions into regiments and regiments into divisions and by giving to the units thus created the necessary support (artillery, engineers, armor, communications) taking into account the very special character of the war in Indochina (the terrain, the enemy). To bring about a maximum of cooperation with the Air Force and the Navy.

V.—To maintain a reserve of special type units (armor, commando, light battalions, etc.) for attachment to groups and divisions in accordance with requirements of terrain and mission.

VI.—To continue the effort of instructing and organizing the Army of the Associated States so as to give them more and more participation as well as more and more autonomy in the conduct of operations.

Editorial Note

On September 2, 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles delivered an address on Korean problems before the American Legion at St. Louis. His remarks included the following statement with regard to Indochina:

"We do not make the mistake of treating Korea as an isolated affair. The Korean war forms one part of the worldwide effort of communism to conquer freedom. More immediately it is part of that effort in Asia.

"A single Chinese-Communist aggressive front extends from Korea on the north to Indochina in the south. The armistice in Korea, even if it leads to a political settlement in Korea, does not end United States concern in the western Pacific area. As President Eisenhower said in his April 16 speech, a Korean armistice would be a fraud if it merely released Communist forces for attack elsewhere.

"In Indochina, a desperate struggle is in its eighth year. The outcome affects our own vital interests in the western Pacific, and we are already contributing largely in material and money to the combined efforts of the French and of Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia.

"We Americans have too little appreciated the magnitude of the effort and sacrifices which France has made in defense of an area which is no longer a French colony but where complete independence is now in the making. This independence program is along lines which the United States has encouraged and justifies increased United States aid, provided that will assure an effort there that is vigorous and decisive.

"Communist China has been and now is training, equipping, and supplying the Communist forces in Indochina. There is the risk that, as in Korea, Red China might send its own army into Indochina. The Chinese Communist regime should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina. I say this soberly in the interest of peace and in the hope of preventing another aggressor miscalculation.

"We want peace in Indochina, as well as in Korea. The political conference about to be held relates in the first instance to Korea. But growing out of that conference could come, if Red China wants it, an end of aggression and restoration of peace in Indochina. The United States would welcome such a development."

For the full text of the address, see Department of State *Bulletin*, September 14, 1953, pages 339–342.

Secretary Dulles amplified his remarks on Indochina at his press conference of September 3. Department of State Press Release No. 475 of that date read as follows:

"Asked at his press conference on September 3 whether his St. Louis speech was subject to conflicting interpretation as to whether the United States was willing to include the question of a possible restoration of peace in Indochina at the Korean political conference, Secretary Dulles made the following reply:

> 'I do not think that I ever said that these political talks would necessarily be limited exclusively to Korea. We have said that the conference as originally set up, in our opinion, should be limited to Korea. But also I think I have made clear that, if matters at that conference go well and the Chinese Communists show a disposition to settle in a reasonable way such a question as Indochina, we would not just on technical grounds say, "No, we won't talk about that."
>
> 'Of course, any discussions which dealt with Indochina would have to have a different participation than the conference which dealt with Korea. For example, the Republic of Korea is an indispensable party to a conference such as is projected about Korea. But Korea would not be an indispensable party to discussions about Indochina. So that in effect it would not be the same conference. Certainly in any discussion about Indochina, for example, the three Associated States of Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia would be necessary parties. They are not parties to the Korean conference. What we mean is that if the atmosphere, insofar as it may be contributed to by Communist China, seemed to be conducive for the settlement of the Indochina war, we would not be opposed to that.' " (Department of State *Bulletin*, September 14, 1953, pages 342–343)

751G.5 MSP/9–353: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, September 3, 1953—7 p. m.

902. In Bidault's absence on vacation, Maurice Schumann handed me this afternoon official copy of Indochina memorandum which, at first glance, appears identical with information previously given us by Jacquet. Original document signed by Laniel under date September 1. Embassy will compare texts and advise promptly whether or not there are any differences.[1]

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[1] On the evening of Sept. 1, French Secretary of State for the Associated States Jacquet handed Timmons and McGrew of the Mutual Security Agency Mission in France an "advance copy" of a memorandum dated Sept. 1 which was designed to answer the questions on the French program for Indochina which were contained in the memoranda submitted to the French Government on Aug. 26 and 27. (Regarding the United States memoranda of Aug. 26 and 27, see footnote 4, p. 739.)

Schumann told me that reinforcements for Indochina will begin leaving France at the end of this month or the first of October, so that all will have arrived in Indochina by November 1. French Government, for planning purposes, requires definite commitment that the whole of $400 million will be made available. Possibility that part of this sum may be subject to congressional appropriation next January is still causing serious concern here. Therefore, it is important that after NSC meeting on September 10 I be authorized to confirm in as definite a form as possible that entire $400 million will be made available by United States in one way or another.

Prior to seeing Schumann, Bonnet called on me at Bidault's request. He had been called back by Laniel to coordinate directly information Laniel had received from me and information Laniel had received from Department through French Embassy in Washington. Difference in emphasis two sources had borne upon question of whether commitment for entire 400 million would really be firm. Bonnet replied that Laniel felt it was most important that commitment for entire sum be definitely firm. Bonnet hoped that if decision of NSC on September 10 should be favorable, I be authorized to inform Laniel and Foreign Office the first thing Friday morning, the 11th. Laniel very anxious for earliest possible information because of consequences of decisions on his budget as outlined Embassy's telegram 819.[2]

Bonnet further said that Bidault would like to sign whatever definite agreement is set up on this subject when he is in New York for General Assembly meeting. However, if it is necessary, for any reason, to sign an agreement sooner, Bidault would have no objection to it being signed here in Paris.

DILLON

An informal translation of the advance copy of the French memorandum of Sept. 1 and one of its five annexes (Annex 4, "Principles of Military Action in Indochina") was transmitted to Washington by teleconference between Timmons and McGrew in Paris and Bonsal of PSA and Laurence C. Vass of RA on the same evening. The Paris participants stated that the memorandum had reportedly received the agreement of Premier Laniel, Foreign Minister Bidault, and Defense Minister Pleven, and thus represented the "position of the French Government." They added that the memorandum seemed at first reading to go a "long way towards filling the bill." (751G.5 MSP/9–153)

In telegram 910 from Paris, Sept. 3, Ambassador Dillon set forth the differences, which were not substantial, between the advance copy of Sept. 1, and the official copy of the French memorandum received Sept. 3. (751G.5 MSP/9–353) The Embassy transmitted copies of the memorandum and its five annexes to Washington in despatch 709 of Sept. 3. (751G.5/9–353) The official French text, signed by Premier Laniel, was transmitted to Washington with despatch 938 from Paris, Oct. 2. (751G.5 MSP/10–253) For a translation of the French memorandum and Annex 4 thereto, as well as additional information on the memorandum and its annexes, see memorandum prepared by the Department of State for the National Security Council, circulated on Sept. 8, p. 767.

[2] Dated Aug. 29, p. 740.

Secretary's Staff Meetings, lot 63 D 75

Summary of Staff Meeting, Secretary's Office, Department of State, September 4, 1953, 9:15 a. m.[1]

SECRET

Participants:

- Mr. Dulles
- General Smith
- Mr. Lourie[2]
- Mr. Matthews
- Mr. Phleger[3]
- Mr. Howe[4]
- Mr. Bonbright
- Mr. Bowie
- Mr. MacArthur
- Mr. Johnson
- Mr. Nolting
- Mr. O'Connor
- Mr. McCardle (later)
- Mr. Scott

[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

3. *Indo-China.*

Mr. Matthews reported that he, Mr. Bowie and Mr. MacArthur would be talking to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on this subject this morning.

The Secretary stated that he was planning to see the President in Denver Monday.[5] That he would like to clear this matter with the President. He desired the proposed exchange of letters with the French to be in as concrete terms as possible.

Mr. MacArthur recommended that before we make final commitments to the French, the President contact Congressional leaders to receive their approval of the program. He mentioned that this could be done immediately upon the President's return to Washington.

General Smith felt that we must make sure that the French proceed with troop movements before receiving our final commitment if we plan to have any delay.

Mr. Nolting felt that both Mr. Stassen and Defense felt it necessary to consult with the appropriations committees regarding this item before giving commitment to the French. He pointed out that the second French plan submitted to us had been changed so that much of the additional $400 million would be used for pay, feeding and clothing of Vietnamese troops and that this runs counter to the FOA legislation.

There was a general discussion on this in which Mr. Phleger pointed out that although the matter had not been submitted to him, from what he had heard this morning he felt that using the money for this purpose would be difficult of receiving approval from the Appropriations Committee Chairman.

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[1] Drafted by Walter K. Scott, Director of the Executive Secretariat.

[2] Donold B. Lourie, Under Secretary of State for Administration.

[3] Herman Phleger, Legal Adviser.

[4] Fisher Howe, Deputy Special Assistant for Intelligence.

[5] Secretary Dulles flew to Denver on Sept. 6 and met with the vacationing President at Lowry Air Force Base, Denver, at 9 a. m., Monday morning, Sept. 7. (Dulles papers, "Daily Appointments"; Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments") No record of the conversation has been found.

Mr. Nolting reported that as of last night FOA felt that there was no way to work out the grant without conflicting with the legislation but that they were continuing to explore and would have further information some time this morning.

Mr. MacArthur requested the Secretary to call Stassen to obtain his support for quick and high-level attention in FOA.

The Secretary mentioned that it would probably be best for Mr. Stassen and someone from Defense to accompany him when he saw the President Monday on this item. The Secretary approved mentioning his plan of the trip to see the President to the Joint Chiefs of Staff but desired no publicity at this time.

[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

State–JCS Meetings, lot 61 D 417

Substance of Discussions of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at the Pentagon Building, September 4, 1953, 11 a. m.[1]

TOP SECRET

PRESENT

Admiral Radford[2]
General Twining
General Ridgway[3]
General Carns [*Admiral Carney*][4]
General Everest
Admiral Gardner
General Lemnitzer
General Gerhart
General Ruffner

Mr. H. Freeman Matthews
Mr. Robert R. Bowie
Mr. Douglas MacArthur, II
Mr. Livingston Merchant
Mr. Ridgway Knight
Mr. Philip Bonsal
Mr. Frederick Nolting
Mr. U. A. Johnson
Mr. Charles C. Stelle

CIA

General Cabell

Defense

Admiral Smith[5]

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[1] This State Department draft was not cleared with the participants.

[2] Adm. Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since Aug. 15, 1953.

[3] Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, since Aug. 15, 1953.

[4] Adm. Robert B. Carney, Chief of Naval Operations since Aug. 17, 1953.

[5] Rear Adm. H. P. Smith, Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense.

NSC

Mr. S. Everett Gleason

Mr. Matthews: This is our first meeting since you gentlemen came in as the new Chiefs of Staff. I would like to say that from the State Department's point of view we have found this series of friendly and informal meetings extremely valuable. For our part we have learned a lot in these conversations about the military implications of what we do in the political field and conversely we have had opportunities to discuss with you the political impact of what you do in the military field. We think that these State–JCS Meetings have contributed greatly to our understanding and effectiveness.

Admiral Radford: I am sure I can speak for the new Chiefs of Staff in saying that we look forward to the closest continued association with you in the State Department.

Mr. Matthews: We would like to talk this morning about Indochina. There have been in the past several discouraging factors. On the military side the French have failed to show an offensive spirit or to demonstrate confidence. On the political side the French have up till now given the natives in Indochina no incentive which would make them really feel that they were fighting for their own country. We think that right now the recent developments may be hopeful. General Navarre has shown signs of possessing a really aggressive spirit and his plans call for offensive action. On the political side the recent French declarations that they are willing to go ahead with negotiations to complete the independence of the Associated States may have very valuable political effects. There is particular urgency now in that the rainy season will stop in September and the fighting season will open. The French have now agreed, subject to receiving from us additional assistance they have requested, to send some nine battalions of reinforcements to Indochina. This is a decision that frankly we would not have thought possible some months ago. It is therefore really urgent that we get ahead with an NSC decision on whether or not we will make available to the French the financial assistance for which they are asking.

Mr. MacArthur: It is important to realize that the French decision to send nine battalions of reinforcement to Indochina is one bound to be particularly unpopular. If we don't get an agreement with them sewed up immediately and if the troops are not actually moving in the very near future, we have some apprehension that this favorable decision might become a political football and be reversed. In that case this promising opportunity would go down the drain. Laniel has told our Secretary of his determination really to go through with this decision. We don't think that it is likely, in fact it is highly improbable, that Laniel would be succeeded by any French leader who would be willing or able to take as forthright and positive a position on Indochina as Laniel has now adopted. We feel that if we don't move rapidly to get an agreement with the French sewed up now we might run the risk of encountering a successor French Government, which would look primarily toward withdrawal from Indochina. If we can't act to take advantage of this immediate opportunity we may be faced with a most difficult situation with regard to Indochina next year. Premier Laniel is well aware of the difficulties of the situation in Indochina. He is particularly aware of the importance of the political developments there. He has said that he wants to remove the remaining old-line colonial administrators and to undertake genuine negotiations for the independence of the Associated States. We have been concerned on the timing of the actual movement of reinforcements. Up until yesterday the French had talked of trying to get their forces out there by the middle of December. For the reasons I have already outlined, we have thought it was imperative to get the reinforcements actually moving. Yesterday we received an encouraging message which said that the French are now working out schedules which would get forces to Indochina by the first of November.[6] The immediate problems that we face in this government center around the NSC consideration of this question next Wednesday.[7] The President will have to decide whether or not we can notify the French of our willingness to provide them with additional financial assistance and the terms on which we provide them with such assistance. The President will also have to consider what method to use in securing legislative approval for making available any additional financial assistance. For our own part we feel that there is no real alternative to giving the French the help which they are asking for unless it is that of accepting gradual French withdrawal from Indochina. We feel that on the basis of the information which the French have given us we do have grounds for moving ahead in an effort to assist the French to make progress in Indochina.

Mr. Merchant: I think there are three factors which bear emphasizing in this situation. In the first place this French Government is the only one in recent years that has been willing to contemplate an increased effort in Indochina. In my opinion it may be the last French Government which is willing to take on such an effort. The second point that I think we should keep in mind is what the French really need and want at this stage is budgetary assistance rather than end items, and the third point is that if the French can start on a course which leads to success in Indochina and which promises the possibility of eventual withdrawal of some French expeditionary forces, this might be the greatest single factor contributing to French ratification to EDC and the achievement of a German contribution to the defense of Western Europe.

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[6] Reference is to telegram 902 from Paris, Sept. 3, p. 748.

[7] Sept. 9.

Mr. MacArthur: I think the last point that Merchant made is a very important one. From our talks with Laniel it is clear that the Indochina situation has a very direct bearing on the French attitude toward EDC.

Admiral Radford: As you know, I have had some opportunities to become familiar with the situation in Indochina. I, personally, have felt that the basic difficulty was political rather than military and the political difficulties centered in Paris. Since Delattre died there has been a deterioration in the situation. Delattre had sufficient prestige and authority so that he wasn't hamstrung by orders from Paris. With his death the civil and military authority in French Indochina was split up and the effects of political indecision in Paris were intensified. I personally think that the French, if they really put their heart into it, could win a military victory in Indochina in two years and with true aggressive leadership they might do it in one year. I thought Salan had a chance last year to almost wrap up the war. He gave me an outline of what he was going to do and it looked very sensible, but the trouble was he simply didn't do it. The French will have another chance this fall.

I have always to some degree discounted the possibility that the French might decide to pull out of Indochina because that would so clearly mean the end of the French as a great power. But for this very reason it is clearly in our interest to prevent a French withdrawal just because we would lose the French as a powerful ally. I feel we should comply with the request which the French have made just as rapidly as we possibly can act on it. Mr. Dulles' statement in St. Louis[8] is of real importance in this situation. The French have always given as an excuse for not undertaking offensive action the possibility that offensive action might result in Chinese Communist intervention. The Secretary of State's indication that we would take a very serious view with any Chinese Communist intervention should go far towards eliminating this French excuse. I also think that Laniel's statement that he is going to remove the old colonial civil servants in Indochina is very important. All in all I think that there is now a chance of putting the Indochina war on the right track. If we give the French the backing that they are asking for and if the French go through with what they say they are going to do, I think we might look forward to the possibility of the French withdrawing part of their forces within two years. One question I have is whether or not we actually have the money.

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[8] See editorial note, p. 747.

Mr. Matthews: I have the impression that there is money earmarked which could be used.

Mr. Nolting: There are funds reserved which could be used. We have some problems in finding ways to use the funds in the precise way in which the French would like, but I think we can overcome those problems.

Mr. MacArthur: I would like to underline what Admiral Radford has said about the importance of moving rapidly. If we move fast we really help the French in creating the means and the spirit for them to move rapidly.

Admiral Radford: I think you are quite right. Last May you may remember that I recommended giving them some C–119's and we managed to move on it with real speed. I really recommended this not because I was absolutely sure they needed the planes, but because I knew if we didn't give them the planes they would have an excuse to blame us for not cooperating and that moving fast on the planes helped spur their own efforts. There is one thing I would like to bring up. I think it would be useful if we had an American officer out there to sort of ride herd on what the French do this campaigning season. If in the meantime we have agreed to give the French the money they are asking for, I would like to recommend that we send O'Daniel out to buck up Navarre in going through with his plans.

Mr. MacArthur: If O'Daniel goes back after we give the French this additional assistance, it will strengthen his hand in encouraging Navarre to deliver on his plans.

General Ruffner: On the question of money, I think it is evident that we will need clearance with congressional leaders.

Mr. MacArthur: Our thought was that we first might get the legal advice as to use of reserved funds for this purpose and then move into the problem of congressional relations.

Mr. Nolting: Since I last talked with General Ruffner I have indications from our legal people that the problem will not be primarily a legal problem, but essentially that of getting an OK from congressional leaders.

General Cabell: Might I mention that from the point of view of CIA, we think that the French have set their sights too low on what might be done in guerrilla warfare. We don't think that the French will get anywhere in guerrilla warfare unless Navarre takes a real interest in it and pushes it. If he does, however, we think that something might really be accomplished.

Admiral Radford: I agree the French haven't exploited their possibilities in that field and up to now they have been afraid to trust the native people.

Mr. Matthews: What is the actual situation with regard to an NSC decision.

Mr. Bowie: On August 5 [*6*] the French request was discussed in general terms in the NSC.[9] At that time the President said that if State, FOA, and the JCS were agreed that the French program had possibilities of success, the U.S. should be prepared to exceed [*accede*] to the French request. I assume that it is now up to us to come forward with a formal expression of opinion as to whether the French progress fulfills the various requirements that the NSC stipulated.

Admiral Radford: We have sent a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense which gives our views on the possibility of success of the Navarre Plan.[10] In general it says that we believe necessary support should be given to the French conditional on evidence of French willingness to go through with the program. I understand the Secretary of Defense has sent our memorandum over to your Secretary with his concurrence.

General Ridgway: I have a question on this. Do we just give the French $385 million and then sit back and hope that they meet our conditions? I have read the French documents and frankly I don't get any particular impression of offensive spirit from what they are talking about.

Mr. MacArthur: They don't say they will take an all-out offensive this fall—they do say that they will undertake offensive actions which they hope to step up in spring and direct themselves to making their main effort in the next dry season.

Admiral Radford: I personally don't believe there is any reason why they have to wait a year. I think the French have enough out there now, and particularly if they reinforce this fall, to win the war if they would only change their military concept. They are all tied up in a static position and are afraid to move out of their bases and hit the organized Viet Minh divisions. A change of concept on the part of the French could do a lot. I think if we can send O'Daniel out to ride the herd on them, he might be able to talk Navarre into really pushing forward.

Admiral Carnes [*Carney*]: My feeling is that if the French pull out of Indochina then the problem is going to be right in our laps. It seems to me that this is the time for us to help the French in taking forceful action. I think we should go along with their request on the condition that we have a chance to needle them into taking aggressive action. I think we want to be in a position to give the high command direct advice and to expand the possibilities of the MAAG influencing French action.

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[9] For the record of the action taken by the National Security Council at its meeting of Aug. 6, see p. 718.

[10] See memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Aug. 28, p. 744.

Mr. Merchant: With regard to General Ridgway's question, we could make an agreement which would result in our paying out the money over a stated period of time and in installments. But in the light of the political problems of the Laniel Government, we think it would be better for us to say that we will give them all the assistance which they are requesting provided they do their part and not to make an agreement which would clearly indicate that we were doling out the money over a period of time.

Admiral Radford: I agree. Then if the French do back down on their part, there is nothing to keep us from backing down on our part.

751G.5 MSP/9-453: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, September 4, 1953—7:21 p. m.

375. Limited distribution. Following is summary status Franco-American exchanges new French military program and United States aid. Full text pertinent material pouched today, estimated transit time nine days. Material should be very closely held. Make available Trapnell.

French Government memorandum[2] confirms acceptance in general Navarre recommendations on basis early United States commitment additional United States aid of magnitude about $400 million. State, Foreign Operations Administration and Defense views now being formulated for National Security Council September 9.

Nine reinforcement battalions including Korean to be landed Indochina by November 1. Native force buildup for 1954 to be slightly decreased over previous estimates although 1953 goals will be exceeded.

French appear indicate presently programmed end items for delivery in 1954 will meet needs all forces Indochina. However French have also stated new requirements for unspecified number helicopters, two LST, one transport vessel and twenty-five C-47 aircraft. Only last item appears to have been submitted MAAG Saigon. Is this correct?

Exclusive MDAP aid, French show total 1954 cost native armies about 195 billion francs and thesis maintained this should be financed entirely from United States and Associated States sources. Of total, French estimate 60 billions could come from Associated States, leaving 135 billions to be financed by United States. Your views appreciated on capability Associated States to meet 60 billion figure, which in piasters is nearly double this year's contribution.[3]

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal and Getz of PSA.

[2] For text, see p. 770.

DULLES

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[3] In telegram 423 from Saigon, Sept. 10, Ambassador Heath reported that MAAG Saigon had received formal requests for most of the additional end-items cited in the penultimate paragraph. With regard to the financial contribution of the Associated States, the Ambassador expressed the opinion that Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia would fall substantially short of the amounts which were expected of them. (751G.5 MSP/9–1053)

751G.5 MSP/9–753 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, September 7, 1953—midnight.

941. Limit distribution. My remarks on EDC in Embassy telegram 939[1] were directed to specific problem of including written refference (Point Six) to question of French ratification of EDC Treaty in the form exchange of notes regarding additional Indochina aid.

I feel the attempt to inject a written reference to EDC at this late date into the projected Indochina agreement might delay completion of negotiations and would cost US a portion of good will we will acquire as result of this new assistance. Also I fear that such a written connection which could only be construed as forced by US would be resented by French public opinion and might very well do harm to the prospects of ratification in the French Parliament. However, I am equally clear that we should make the connection in forceful manner to French Government. It would seem to me that this could very well be done orally at time of conclusion of formal agreement.

It is my thinking that this connection should be made both to Bidault and to Laniel. Representations could be made along following lines:

Begin summary: French themselves have in past repeatedly referred to the connection between the Indochinese drain and French participation in the European Army. We have appreciated their problems in this regard and we have now found it possible both to relieve France of a further part of IC defense expenditures and to supply the extra financing needed to permit the rapid build-up of the national armies, thus looking toward a satisfactory conclusion of the Indochina war in the foreseeable future. We, therefore, most hopeful this action will greatly contribute toward a solution of the strains and problems IC has created for France. Specifically we feel that this action by US should facilitate ratification of EDC by French Parliament. Our desire to help create the necessary preconditions for ratification of EDC was one of principal reasons which decided US to make this additional aid available for Indochina. *End summary.*

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[1] Telegram 939 from Paris, Sept. 7, concerning the preparation of notes to be exchanged between the United States and France to serve as an agreement regarding additional U.S. aid for Indochina, is not printed. (751G.5 MSP/9–753)

DILLON

751G.00/9-853 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, September 8, 1953—4 p. m.

950. Repeated information Saigon priority 88. Prime Minister Tam returned unexpectedly to Paris from Cannes yesterday. Embassy officer called on him last evening.

Tam stated he had advanced his return to Saigon by two days (he is leaving today) as a result of the pressing need to get the Nationalist Congress which will choose the Vietnamese delegation to the forthcoming Franco-Vietnamese negotiations under way. He had had a most satisfactory two days with Bao Dai in Cannes and was proceeding on instructions from the Chief of State, with which he entirely agreed.

Tam explained that the Congress would have an entirely free hand in choosing the members of the Vietnamese delegation. He hoped that all sections of Vietnamese opinion (excepting the Viet Minh) would be represented. The delegation need not include members of the government but Tam obviously intends that it shall. Although given ample [garble] Tam made no reference to Buu Loc's claim that he would serve as liaison officer between the Congress and Bao Dai.

We questioned him as to the significance of the declaration issued by the five anti-Communist nationalist leaders including Monsignor Ngo Toc-Dinh, Pham Cong-Tac and Nguyen Zuan-Chu, which was fully covered in yesterday's Paris press. Tam belittled the importance of the declaration. He claims to have known before his departure from Saigon that it was to be made. The signers had waited for his absence to release it. He described them as chronic dissenters whose main objective was to get in the public eye to assure a place for themselves in the delegation. Bao Dai's position had not been harmed by the declaration. It was possible, even likely, that the signatories would be members of the delegation.

As to the timing of forthcoming events Tam would make no prediction regarding the length of time required to establish the Nationalist Congress much less the time required by the Congress to choose the Vietnamese delegation. He believes "it may take weeks or months".

Tam approached the subject of postponement of his scheduled trip to the US reluctantly although it was obviously for him the prime purpose of the interview. He expressed his concern at offending the US Government by requesting a further postponement of his visit but admitted that his schedule was now such that he did not see how he would be able to get to the US by September 21, although he still intended to try. We gave him strong assurances that we understood perfectly the urgency of the tasks facing him and were confident that the US Government would consider any request for postponement of his trip sympathetically. We urged him to make a decision as soon as possible, reminding him of the busy schedule of the officials he would expect to see in Washington. He replied that he would make a final decision soon after his arrival in Saigon where he would be able to judge the difficulties facing him in the formation of the Congress.

Tam took pains throughout to impress us with the solidarity of his position and the extent of his understanding with Bao Dai. If he had received his walking papers in Cannes he concealed the fact admirably. He appeared to be returning to Saigon not as a man who had just lost a battle but as one who had just overcome a difficult obstacle and was impatient to get back into the fight with renewed vigor and confidence.

We believe that he has already decided to request postponement of his trip to the US but wishes we do so from Saigon rather than Paris, both as a courtesy to Ambassador Heath and as a means of avoiding any implication that Bao Dai had been responsible for influencing his decision (as he undoubtedly has).[1]

Tam's claims regarding the importance of the Nationalist declaration of September 6 appear to be borne out by today's Paris press account of the attempts of the signers to annul the declaration before its release and the subsequent withdrawal of that portion of it which criticizes Bao Dai.

DILLON

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[1] In telegram 433 from Saigon, Sept. 11, Ambassador Heath reported that President Tam had informed him that he preferred to postpone his visit to the United States in view of his responsibilities in connection with the formation of the national congress. Ambassador Heath had indicated that his government would understand perfectly. (751G.00/9–1153) The Department of State announced the postponement of the Tam visit at the daily news briefing of Sept. 14. No new date was specified. (ON files, lot 60 D 641)

751G.5 MSP/9-853

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] September 8, 1953.

Subject: French Note of September 1 regarding Indochina,[1] also the Secretary's St. Louis Speech.[2]

Participants: M. Pierre Pelletier, Second Secretary, French Embassy
Mr. Philip W. Bonsal, PSA

M. Pelletier came in at his request today. He referred to the French Note of September 1, handed to Ambassador Dillon on September 3rd, regarding Indochina. He asked me whether I could give him any preliminary impressions with regard to this note. In reply, I stated that the note had produced a favorable impression here, that the whole subject was under active study by the Department, Defense and FOA at the highest levels and that I thought this Government's position regarding the French Note would be defined very shortly. I said that I believed there might be some additional points on which we would wish information or clarification from the French Government. In reply to a question, I told M. Pelletier that I knew it was the Secretary's desire, as the Under Secretary had indicated to M. Daridan three weeks ago, to get this matter to the National Security Council without delay but that I could not inform him whether this would be possible this week. I endeavored to give M. Pelletier on the whole an optimistic impression while leaving the way open to further requests for information or even for commitments from the French Government.

M. Pelletier referred to a letter which M. Bidault has sent to the Secretary thanking the latter for the references to Indochina and particularly to the possibility of negotiations in his St. Louis speech.[3] M. Pelletier said that this reference had been most helpful to the French Government in that French public opinion could now see that the U.S. did not regard the indefinite continuation of the war as the only possible prospect for Indochina. I took occasion to repeat what has so often been said by the Secretary and others to the French, namely that the achievement of a position where any sort of successful negotiation might take place in Indochina depends strictly upon the energetic prosecution of the war and the making of considerable military progress. M. Pelletier expressed agreement with this view but reported that the position which the Secretary had taken in his

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[1] For text, see p. 770.

[2] See editorial note, p. 747.

[3] The letter under reference was transmitted in Note No. 523 from the French Embassy, Sept. 3, not printed. (751G.00/9-353)

St. Louis speech would be most helpful in France and would give French public opinion a desirable impression of the breadth and flexibility of U.S. views on this matter.

751G.00/9–953

Memorandum by the Regional Planning Adviser, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (Ogburn) [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] September 8, 1953.

Subject: Alternatives in Indochina

In addition to the other contributions it makes to our understanding of the Indochina problem, Mr. Bonsal's redraft of paragraphs 21 through 23 of the Far East section of Solarium [2] performs a valuable service in directing attention to the fact that the situation in Indochina "may in the near future become increasingly critical, in spite of U.S. willingness to increase material aid, because of political and military factors in France and in Indochina." Mr. Bonsal points out that we may be confronted by a choice between witnessing a take-over of the area by the Communists, quite possibly as the result of a negotiated settlement, or sending American troops, which he suggests would probably lead to a full-scale war with Communist China. It seems to me that Mr. Bonsal's estimate impels us to a further examination of the choices open to us in Indochina. For however devoutly we may hope that the currently projected French effort may with our very substantial support succeed in its objectives, we must note that several factors make its success uncertain. The French apparently will have to obtain fairly quick results. French public opinion seems unlikely to sustain indecisive operations for very much longer. In other words, if the Viet Minh can hold out, it will see the situation turn increasingly to its advantage. The French cannot terminate or even greatly reduce their present very costly efforts in Indochina until seven or eight Viet Minh divisions are largely eliminated.

I doubt that we should count altogether upon the French being able to accomplish that. The Viet Minh divisions have been proved in battle. They can be and presumably will be generously supplied from Communist China. When hard-pressed, they have excellent cover. They have not only mountainous, forested terrain for refuge, but a population well disposed to them in which to merge. They have a vast and friendly country at their back. Far from having lost the initiative since American military aid was begun three years ago, they have gained it. Their ability to march almost unimpeded through most of Laos last spring was a demonstration that they are far from defeated.

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[1] This memorandum was directed to U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, and Philip W. Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.

[2] For documentation on Project Solarium, a National Security Council exercise involving the study of alternative forms of broad national strategy with respect to the Communist nations, see volume II. The Bonsal redraft cited here has not been specifically identified.

To repeat, if the Viet Minh can hold out. there is a significant possibility that the French will weary of the burden and unload it as best they may. This, I believe, is the Department's estimate.

Unless we are to be caught short, I think we should consider what alternatives to the success of present plans are likely to offer. Mr. Bonsal has called attention to two of these alternatives:

1. As Mr. Bonsal has pointed out, there is the possibility of the Communists gaining control of Indochina either by military conquest as French forces are withdrawn or as the ultimate result of some sort of negotiation. This negotiation might take place between the French and the State of Vietnam on one side and the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" on the [other], or between the leading non-Communist Vietnamese and the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam." If we continue to rely wholly upon the French being able to carry out their present plans and make no provision for their lack of success, then this would, I imagine be the most probable outcome of a failure of the present French effort.

2. A second possibility, as Mr. Bonsal has expressed it, is that the U.S. might undertake "far-reaching efforts to retrieve the situation including, if necessary, the employment of U.S. armed forces." It is certainly questionable if the Chinese Communists would sit back and allow us to eliminate the Vietnamese Communists (if we could) and carry the American flag to the southern border of China. The Chinese Communists' reaction to the appearance of American forces on the Yalu does not, however, necessarily indicate how they would respond to a similar development in Indochina; the power centers of China are much closer to Korea than to Tonkin, and, in addition, Chinese Communist supply lines to South China are much longer and more vulnerable than those to Korea. On the other hand, the attitude of the local population in Vietnam would be much more favorable from the point of view of Communist China than the attitude of the Koreans. An important question that would arise in connection with the deployment of American forces in Indochina would concern the nature of our objective. What would we be seeking to bring about? We are accustomed to going to war to save other peoples from subjugation by foreign tyranny, that is, in defense of the principle of self-determination. Presumably, if we sent armed forces to Indochina, it would not be for the purpose of restoring French control (the American people could not be expected to accept our turning Indochina back to a foreign army after thousands of Americans had been killed in liberating it from the Communists) or to convert Vietnam into an American colony on the pattern of the Philippines in 1900, even if American control were exercised through a Vietnamese regime maintained by American troops. If the objective of our intervention would in fact be Vietnamese self-determination, that fact would have a bearing upon the third alternative.

3. The third possibility would be an international solution with perhaps the following elements:

> 1. Submission of Indochina by France to the UN on a complaint of aggression by Communist China.
> 2. Decision by the UN to have case settled on the basis of Vietnamese self-determination.
> 3. A cease-fire and the withdrawal of opposing forces behind demilitarized zones.
> 4. The institution of a neutral commission (India, Burma, Thailand, the Philippines) to prepare the country for a plebiscite.
> 5. The replacement of the armed forces of the two sides with an indigenous police force recruited and commanded by the neutral commission, supplemented as necessary by troops from the nations composing the commission.
> 6. A period of free electioneering under the supervision of the neutral commission.
> 7. The election of an all-Vietnamese government and the neutralization of Vietnam.

For such a solution to have any chance of success from our point of view, it would have to be proposed by our side from a position of strength, that is, the French would have to raise the question of Indochina in the United Nations after having achieved at least a limited military success, with the U. S. demonstrating a strong and determined military position with respect to Indochina.

The Soviet Union, speaking also for Communist China and the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam", might reject the proposed solution. In that case a moral advantage that might bring decisive Vietnamese and other Asian support might well accrue to the Associated States and France. On the other hand, the Communists might well accept the proposal in anticipation that it would lead to a Communist victory in Indochina. It might of course do so.

However, I believe we should study very carefully the possibilities inherent in a solution of this kind. If the French are going to be looking for a way out of the Indochina impasse, certainly a plebiscite under the most favorable supervision we could obtain would be much more advantageous to us than any kind of negotiations from which Ho Chi-minh would emerge victorious. We should bear in mind that the countries that would be on the supervisory commission have no desire whatsoever to see Indochina brought within the Communists' sphere and could be expected to exert themselves (just as they have within their own borders) to make sure that the Communists would not prevail. It is also worth recalling that never in history have the Communists anywhere been voted into power. In any case, in considering what an international solution might have to offer, we should not judge it in comparison with a theoretically ideal solution but in comparison with the alternatives that are actually likely to offer.

There would seem to be some danger in our waiting until we find out whether the Navarre Plan is going to succeed before considering where we shall stand if it does not. If it fails and we have not developed any alternative course of action for ourselves, the result may be that it will be too late to save Indochina. It would certainly be too late to attempt an international solution with any very great hope of a favorable outcome. If at that stage it should seem imperative to send American troops, I would think that the national leadership should have taken measures in advance to prepare the American people for such a decision. The ground, that is, should be prepared now.

Otherwise, the crisis when it comes, to judge by present trends, might find the country in a mood of such relaxation as to make it difficult to obtain Congressional acquiescence in the despatch of Americans to a new Korea. Moreover, if it seems likely that in the end we shall have to send American troops, I wonder if we should not begin sending them now. Surely a quicker and a more economical military victory would be obtainable by joining our strength to that of the French than by waiting until the French are exhausted and ready to pull out. The concentration of forces in the attack is always to be preferred to their piecemeal commitment. No doubt it would be politically easier to send American troops to Indochina in the face of a threatened catastrophe than to do so now, but this argument would appear to be of doubtful validity if in fact the objective could be achieved with half the loss of American lives by sending American troops now rather than waiting until the situation is next to irretrievable.

Barring overt Chinese Communist intervention (and it may be significant that when Ho Chi-minh's forces seemed likely to overrun Laos, there were no voices in Congress calling for the despatch of American forces), there is the problem of considering what we could do in the anticipation of a failure of the Navarre Plan. What, for instance, can be done to strengthen Thailand and Burma? Are we to accept the fatalistic view that Thailand will inevitably accommodate itself to a Communist Indochina to the extent, in effect, of joining the Communist bloc? I suspect that the PSB paper on Thailand[3] was written on the assumption (theoretical, at least) that the Communists were going to come out on top in Indochina. On such a basis the paper made a good deal of sense which it did not do on any other basis. However, that assumption was nowhere admitted and thus the discussion about the paper was fruitless. Perhaps the strategy proposed in the PSB Paper should be re-examined for its possibilities in the event of a failure of the French effort in Indochina.

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[3] For partial text of PSB D-23, "U.S. Psychological Strategy Based on Thailand," Sept. 14, 1953, a paper prepared by the Psychological Strategy Board, see volume XII.

Alternatively, I believe we should examine the possibility of an international solution to be attempted after a major effort to put the free world in the strongest possible bargaining position. It would be a tragedy if the French persist in being too lofty, too preoccupied with the "mystique" of the French Union, to consider placing Indochina before the UN until nothing is left for them but to get out from under at any cost in prestige and dump a catastrophe in the lap of the free world.

So far our policy on Indochina has been based on an article of faith which has been considered not subject to question: the French cannot and must not fail. With evidence accumulating, however, that the French can and may fail, is not the time at hand when we ought to consider what we can do in anticipation of such a failure? Should not this issue be faced in the Solarium paper?

751G.00/9–853

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] September 8, 1953.

Subject: Indochina.

It is recommended you make the following comments on Indochina to the NSC:

1. Following consultations with Defense, JCS, and FOA last week, I discussed the substance of the paper before the NSC with the President.[1] He approved it with the understanding informal consultation with Congress take place immediately after NSC action.

2. The action which the NSC is considering is of great urgency. Laniel is the first Prime Minister to have both an aggressive military program designed to break the enemy's back and a progressive political program in Indochina. Laniel has let us know that if he is to get his Indochina program through, it is of vital importance that some mutually satisfactory agreement be reached by middle of September. The program involves the sending of 9 battalions to Indochina with other supporting engineer, artillery, signals, and other specialist units. It also involves the raising of native troops by the end of 1953 by 68,300, and by the end of 1954 an additional increase of 71,500, to a grand total of 316,000 including forces already in being.

3. It is imperative that the French reinforcements arrive in Indochina soonest, and if agreement can be reached, they will be shipped in late September so that they will all arrive in Indochina by November 1. From both our viewpoint and Laniel's it is important that rein-

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[1] *Infra.* Presidential approval was obtained in Denver on Sept. 7; see the memorandum of discussion at the 161st Meeting of the NSC, Sept. 9, p. 780.

forcements are en route before Parliament reconvenes early in October.

4. This program does not represent a guaranteed solution. However, the only visible alternative is a continued stalemate for a short while, following which the French will probably begin negotiations for a withdrawal.

5. Ambassador Dillon believes it imperative for political and other reasons that the French send us a note giving us the assurances we need, to which we would make an appropriate acknowledgement. The main points to be covered are set forth in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the paper we have introduced to the NSC.

6. We do not plan to link specifically EDC ratification with our aid to Indochina in the note, but we will obtain firm oral assurances from both Laniel and Bidault that they will push forward with EDC. Although we do not intend for our exchange of notes with the French to be made public, they will doubtless be considered by French parliamentary committees, and if we specifically link Indochina and EDC, we will only cause opponents of both to unite in firm opposition to the additional French effort in Indochina and make it more difficult for Laniel to move forward with both Indochina and EDC.

7. We do not intend to mention possible French devaluation in our note since if the French decide on their own initiative to devalue, we may be accused of having forced them to do so. However, we plan to have a paragraph with a general escape clause in the event circumstances arise which negate the assumptions or understandings on which our aid is given. We will make it clear to Laniel and Bidault that in the event of devaluation, a new situation would arise which would require urgent consultation.

S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351

Memorandum Prepared by the Department of State for the National Security Council[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

Subject: Assistance for Indochina.

Reference: NSC Action No. 874[2]

1. On August 6, 1953 (Action No. 874), the NSC agreed that if the Department of State, Foreign Operations Administration, and the

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[1] The copy of this paper in the files of the Policy Planning Staff bears a notation indicating that it was drafted by Gullion and Stelle of S/P and reflected changes by Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Department. (PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "Indochina") Executive Secretary Lay transmitted the paper to the National Security Council by memorandum of Sept. 8, for consideration at the 161st Meeting of the NSC, Sept. 9. (S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351)

[2] Of Aug. 6, p. 718.

JCS found that the French program for carrying on the war in Indochina held promise of success, the United States should furnish additional support for this program. The NSC directed the Department of State and the FOA to submit to the Council detailed recommendations for doing so.

2. Since the NSC action in reference, the French Government has provided the United States Government with more detailed estimates of the forces build-up necessary for execution of these plans, cost estimates, and a description of French strategic and tactical objectives. The French Government states that additional United States assistance in the amount of $385 million is required. (The French memoranda are attached as Annex A.)

3. Since coming into power, the new French Government has taken the following actions:

(*a*) It has demonstrated full support of a new Commander, General Navarre, who has reinvigorated his command and appears determined to wrest the initiative from the Vietminh.

(*b*) In the face of a reluctant public opinion, it has followed through its bold decision to send reinforcements to Indochina. Provided the French Government has assurances of additional United States support as requested, embarkation will begin in the immediate future and all the reinforcements are scheduled to reach Indochina by November 1, 1953. In concert with the Associated States Governments, the French Command has continued to expand the recruitment of indigenous armies.

(*c*) Following upon its declaration of July 3, 1953, contemplating a much wider independence for the Associated States within the French Union, the French Government's opening moves with respect to negotiations with the States have been generous and promising.

4. The Laniel Government appears to be the first since the Indochina fighting began which is committed to take both the political and military steps which are necessary to achieve a satisfactory solution of the Indochina problem. At the same time, if it succeeds in this task, it will also be in a position to live up to its European responsibilities and to make its due contribution to NATO and EDC.

5. The Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the French plans and taken note of French actions. They concur in the opinion that the French program holds promise of success and can be implemented effectively. It should be recognized that, given favorable progress in the 1953–54 campaign, a substantial further contribution of United States aid will probably be required in Fiscal Year 1955.

6. The Secretary of State and the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration have agreed upon recommendations for proce-

dure to be followed in providing the necessary additional assistance. (Annex B)

7. A prompt decision by the United States Government in support of the French plans is of the highest importance. Early strong affirmative action by the United States will strengthen the hand of the French Government in seeking from the French Assembly the credits necesary for prosecution of the war, and in convincing the public of the prospects of success. It would also have a most helpful impact upon General Navarre and his command in encouraging them to move forward rapidly and vigorously in the implementation of their plan. Failure by the United States Government to act rapidly will most probably result in decisions by the French Government entailing a withdrawal from Indochina and the probable loss of Southeast Asia to the Communists.

8. In granting this additional assistance to the French Government, the United States Government should obtain assurances to the effect that the French Government is determined:

a. To put promptly into effect the program of action set forth in its memorandum of September 1;
b. To carry this program forward vigorously with the object of eliminating regular enemy forces in Indochina;
c. To continue to pursue the policy of perfecting independence of the Associated States, in conformity with the July 3 announcement;
d. To facilitate exchange of information with American military authorities and to take into account their views in developing and carrying out French military plans in Indochina;
e. To assure that no basic or permanent alteration of plans and programs for NATO forces will be made as a result of the additional effort in Indochina.

9. The United States Government should make it clear to the French Government that:

a. The amount of $385 million is deemed to satisfy in full the request made by the French memorandum of September 1;
b. No further financial assistance may be expected for Calendar Year 1954;
c. The United States Government retains the right to terminate this additional assistance should for any reason the French Government plan as outlined in the memorandum of September 1 prove incapable of execution or should other unforeseen circumstances arise which negate the understandings arrived at between the two governments based on paragraphs 8 and 9 herein.

10. The Department of State should enter into further conversations with representatives of the French Government to formalize agreement between the two governments on the basis in paragraphs 8 and 9 above.

Recommendations:

11. That the NSC approve:

a. The granting of additional assistance not to exceed $385 million or its equivalent in local currency as requested by the French, on the basis set forth in paragraphs 8 and 9 above;

b. The provision of this aid, through the use of the President's transfer powers, in conformity with Annex B.

Annex A

Memorandum by the French Government[3]

[Translation]

SECRET PARIS, September 1, 1953.

This memorandum contains the information that the French Government is furnishing the American Government in response to two questionnaires submitted by the American Embassy on August 26 and 27, 1953.[4]

It is, first of all, necessary to affirm that if the financial situation forces the French Government to make, in 1954, certain reductions in military credits below 1953, the French Government nevertheless intends to carry out for Indochina the recommendations made by General Navarre; the execution of the recommendations has already begun. Their complete execution remains subject to the granting, by the American Government, of additional aid amounting to 135 billion French francs which was the subject of the memorandum of August 18, 1953.[5] In the event that this aid could not be granted, a complete reconsideration of the plan of operations in Indochina would be unavoidable.

I. *Forces in Indochina and Their Costs.*

The costs necessary to bring about a satisfactory solution of the Indochina problem have been calculated based upon the program presented by General Navarre. They consist of, on the one hand, expenditures required for the National Armies of the Associated States, on the other, expenditures required for the Expeditionary Corps.

A. *National Armies of the Associated States.*

The necessary expenditures amount to: 195 billion francs.

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[3] This text constitutes the unofficial translation transmitted by the Embassy in Paris to the Department by teleconference on Sept. 1, as modified by minor changes indicated in telegram 910 from Paris, Sept. 3. Confirmation texts of the memorandum and its annexes were transmitted in despatch 709 of Sept. 3. The official French text was transmitted with despatch 938 of Oct. 2. Regarding the communications cited above, see footnote 1, p. 748.

[4] The memoranda are identified in footnote 4, p. 739.

[5] Regarding the French memorandum of Aug. 18, see despatch 589 from Paris, Aug. 20, p. 732.

The present financial situation prevents France from undertaking, even in part, these expenditures in 1954. It is for this reason that the French Government requests of the United States an additional aid, for these purposes, of: 135 billion francs; in the expectation that the Associated States would be able to contribute to the development and the maintenance of their own forces, to the amount of the difference, that is: 60 billion.*

By way of comparison, it is indicated that in 1953:—this part of the French budget was 68 billion francs, the financial situation having prevented this part from reaching 78 billion as had been planned;—the share of the budget of the Associated States had been 32 billion (figure based on the piaster at the rate of 10 francs). The detailed breakdown of these expenditures, by type and for each national army, is given in Annex 1 attached;[6] the latter is presented, as requested by the memorandum, in the same form used in the tables of the first theoretical study, established in connection with the visit of the French Ministers to Washington in March 1953.[7]

The plan of development of the National Armies corresponding to the foregoing expenditures, remains, in its broad concept, the same as set forth in Washington. It calls for reaching by December 31, 1954, a build-up to 315,930 men, very close to the figure 311,650 given in table A of the documentation established in March ("suppletifs" included).

Annex 2 attached shows, in its tables 1 and 2 set up in the form of the previously mentioned table A, the numerically small modifications made to the force build-up.

The only important modifications made to the initial theoretical plan concern the units of the branches and services originally planned (Annex 2, Table IV).

It is apparent, in fact, that a greater and more rapid effort must be made, in favor of light infantry units and that the establishment of certain units of the branches and services must be deferred and carried over until the year 1955.

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*This figure appears to be in any case the extreme limit of the effort which the states are capable of carrying themselves. [Footnote in the source text.]

[6] Annexes 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the French memorandum are not printed. Annex 1, "Expenditure Forecasts for National Armies," consists of one page of text and a table. Annex 2 consists of five pages of tables on the development of the armies of the Associated States. Annex 3 is a one-page table titled "Provisions for Expenditures in 1954 for the French Expeditionary Corps." Annex 5 consists of a one-page table titled "Cost Price Per Man in 1954—Each Army of the Associated States."

[7] The study under reference has not been identified specifically. French plans and requirements were considered by a U.S. working group which visited Paris from Mar. 8 to 13. The French concept of strategic operations in Indochina, logistical problems, and financial requirements were embodied in the so-called Letourneau Plan which was discussed by U.S. and French officials at Washington Mar. 26–31. For documentation on consideration of the French program as set forth in March 1953, see pp. 400–464 *passim*.

Annex 2 shows in its table 3 and along broad lines, the modifications thus planned of which several, it is noted, are being negotiated with the Vietnamese Government. These modifications would have effect upon the orders of matériel of all origins (French and American) and will result in a reduction in the volume of matériel necessary in 1954 for the National Armies, in particular heavy matériel.

B. *Expeditionary Corps.*

The necessary expenditures amount to: 259 billion francs.† This figure represents, in comparison to the total of credits established in 1953 (after the reductions made in May) a reduction in expenditures of: 31 billion francs. This reduction had been obtained in compressing the estimates to the greatest degree and include a reduction in reserve stocks from 9 to 6 months (excluding munitions). Except for this reservation, the budgetary provisions take into account all needs concerning the essential objective: deliver to the Viet-Minh a decisive blow which could eliminate them or lead them to negotiate.

Annex 3 attached establishes after a practical study in Indochina and at Paris the first theoretical plans which were initially recapitulated in the form of table C of the study furnished last March in Washington concerning the costs of the Expeditionary Corps.

C. *Equipment of Support Battalions and Units of the National Armies Created in 1954.*

It is correct that the present stocks of matériel and the deliveries of the MDAP and MSP matériel, ordered and awaited under fiscal year 1954 should satisfy the needs for equipment for the year 1954, with the exceptions noted in paragraph B above.

Every effort is being made to give the entire equipment picture as soon as possible, but to obtain this information requires the participation of the French Command in Indochina; it is thus impossible to present it now.

II. *Effects Upon Requirements of the Adoption of the Navarre Plan.*

As stated above, the French Government approves the plan of which General Navarre presented a summary to General O'Daniel. For the implementation of this plan, as a function of the timetable for the development of the Armed Forces, General Navarre has recommended:

1. That he be granted reinforcements in air forces (transport, fire support and intelligence support) and in naval (transport and fire support) for an appropriate establishment of battle corps in the combined operations planned.

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†Not including the air and navy expenditures estimated for 1954 on a preliminary basis at 57 billion, this figure including the re-enforcement elements requested by General Navarre. [Footnote in the source text.]

2. That he be granted temporary reinforcements in land forces to give the battle corps the means considered necessary for the 1953–54 campaign to the extent that the state of development of the national armies will not have permitted the release of the necessary number of regular units.

The French Government responded to these requests with the following conditions:

1. *Naval and Aerial Reinforcements.*

A. *Naval Forces.*

Two LSTs will sail from the Metropole to Indochina in the beginning of October but they should return, at the dry season (intermousson) of springtime, 1954, on condition that they are replaced by LSTs or equivalent ships furnished by the U.S.

The *Jules Verne* will be maintained in Indochina until the delivery by the US of an equivalent transport vessel.

The carrier *Arromanches* will return to Indochina at the beginning of October.

B. *Air Forces.*

The personnel of an additional transport group is ready to return to Indochina October 1, if the necessary C–47 aircraft are obtained through US aid. Requests to this effect have been made by General Ely in Washington as well as by Saigon.

Various personnel have been granted, for communications, GCA and radar, reinforcements of the SVR, transport, Gonio aircraft and will be sent to Indochina by the first of October.

Reinforcements in SVR personnel by B–26 is under study.

2. *Temporary Reinforcements in Ground Forces.*

3 elements of regimental command and 9 battalions of infantry.

1 battalion of engineers and 1 artillery group of recoilless 75mm with a personnel of about 7,200 men (French, North Africans and Africans) to be filled out locally by about 2,400 locals to be recruited.

These elements will all be landed in Indochina by November 1, 1953.

III. *Plan to Increase Land Forces in 1954.*

The arrangements planned for providing to Indochina the total personnel necessary for the maintenance, in 1954, of the effectives of the Expeditionary Corps and of the French Cadres in the National Armies are being worked out.

To facilitate the solution of this problem, studies have been undertaken in Indochina, along the lines of an adjustment of the detailed plans set forth in Washington in March 1953.

These adjustments are set forth in Annex 2; they have essentially consisted—with a view, in particular, of lessening the needs for specialized personnel (above all, cadres) of certain units of the branches and services to be postponed until later, or even perhaps not to be established at all.

It is thus, for 1954, and for the Vietnamese Army that 14,500 men of the units of the "exceptional plan" have been cut out, but compensated by the advanced setting up of 10,000 men of the third tranche of the light battalions (which was only planned for the beginning of 1955).

Thanks to an excess of 4,500 anticipated at the end of 1953, the total strength of the Vietnamese Army at December 31, 1954 will thus remain fixed at the 272,000 men mentioned in March in Washington.

This measure considerably lessens the needs for specialist categories difficult to find and hard to train and greatly lightens the demand on the Metropole for cadres for the National Armies (which changes from 7,000 in the Washington plan to 5,600 in the Navarre plan of August, 1953).

In conclusion, a certain number of the recommendations formulated by General Navarre have already been carried out; the study of others is very advanced, but the complete execution of the plan remains subordinated:

1. to the granting of the 135 billions aid requested.
2. to the satisfaction of the needs for aid in US materials presented by General Navarre and which he considered essential to the execution of his program; these are the requests for C–47 planes for a 4th transport group, and appropriate maritime transport (LST or Peckett cargo vessels).

Annex 4 attached establishes the principles which will guide the military action of our High Command from the strategic and tactical points of view; these principles remain those which were explained to General O'Daniel, and which have received the approval of the French Government, on condition that the necessary means, explained above, are obtained.

The considerations developed in the present memorandum concern only Indochina.

It is not in fact possible at the present moment to state clearly exactly what will be the French military expenditures in 1954. One of the hypotheses under consideration would involve a reduction of these expenditures by around 150 billions below those of 1953.

But this figure includes the saving corresponding to the fact that it is not planned to maintain as a charge to France the subsidy of 68 billions allocated in 1953 to the three Associated States for the establishment of their armies. With respect to the French NATO military forces, it is not planned to reduce their budget figure by 100 billions below 1953. It is certain that the reduction which could be undertaken will not exceed 30 billions; the definite figure will be established during the coming weeks.

LANIEL

Note: Two subsidiary questions wer[illegible]ed in the US memoranda. The first concerns the battalion in Korea; in this respect, the intention of the French Government is to soon transfer this battalion to Indochina; it will be part of the reenforcements whose composition was fixed during the recent visit of General Navarre to France, and which includes, with respect to infantry, a total of 9 battalions.

The second concerns the initial cost of soldiers belonging to the National Armies of the Associated States; the reply will be found in Annex 5.

Annex 4

Principles of Military Action in Indochina.

The principles which will guide the military action of our High Command in Indochina remain those which have been explained by General Navarre, on the one hand to General O'Daniel at the time of the latter's visit to Indochina in June 1953, and on the other hand, to the French Government at the time of the Commander in Chief's visit to Paris in July (National Defense Committee of July 24, 1953).

These principles can be defined as follows:

A. *From the Strategic Standpoint.*

1. It has been amply demonstrated that, in the face of an adversary whose potential in effectives of regular units is perhaps stabilized, but whose potential in arms and equipment of all kinds is increasing and becoming unceasingly valuable because of Chinese aid, and whose moral potential is maintained or reenforced thanks to Communist ideology, there is only one way to hope to gain victory, and that is to take the offensive. To again seize the initiative of operations and the offensive implies first that the friendly forces have the numerical superiority necessary to achieve a rupture of the equilibrium between the two sides and then that the largest and best part of the forces can be applied in those zones favorable to the destruction or annihilation of the enemy forces. The achievement of this program must furthermore be pursued despite any undertakings by the enemy, which is, at the moment, in a favorable situation in relation to our forces which are still assigned to the static tasks of occupation and pacification of the zones of territories under their control.

2. The rupture of the equilibrium of forces will be attempted—considering that the French effort will remain limited to what is now considered a ceiling—by a substantial and continued increase of the national armies. To the extent that these forces develop quantita-

tively and qualitatively, they will become suitable to assume the responsibilities for maintenance of order, first in the quasi-totality of the zones now under our control, then in further and further extended zones. The takeover by the national armies of the surface defense in the zones now under our control will free up units which are not static—French and local—which should thus become available for the war of movement against the main Viet Minh battle forces. The extension of the zones occupied by friendly forces will thin out the enemy potential all the more to the extent that the zones of extension are chosen from among those considered by the enemy to be vital due to their richness in human and food resources, or because of their geographic position.

B. *From the Tactical Standpoint.*

The undertaking of this strategy then leads to the establishment of plans for the development of friendly forces in such a way that they are definitely articulated in:

1. Surface defense forces with the task of occupying and pacifying zones under friendly control, and with the especial duty of assuring the freedom of operation and security of the logistic support of the armed forces.

2. The surface defense forces will include units of all branches, especially infantry, organized within a territorial framework.

They will be almost entirely composed of units of the national armies (with the exception of several French units for the protection of certain particularly important sensitive zones).

These forces will include particularly the light battalions (called K.Q. battalions in Vietnam) whose essential mission will be to pacify the territory and to keep it pacified, thanks to a form of organization adapted to the territory and to the enemy; by their way of life and by an appropriate method, these light battalions must combat regional national units (*sic*—presumably Viet Minh) and finally annihilate and supplant them, thus bringing security and confidence to the population.

3. The battle corps will be essentially made up of units of branches and services grouped in variable tactical complexes according to the conditions in which they will be used (mountain infantry, airports). The basic complexes will be of the "combat team" type (an organization for command and communication; 3 or 4 battalions; one artillery group; service elements). A certain number will be grouped in divisions whose command element will be capable of "capping" (coiffer) a certain number of groups (in principle, 3 of the same type).

Outside these divisions and groups, it is intended to provide for a certain number of general reserve units which can be earmarked and used according to the circumstances of the moment.

The characteristics of these elements of the battle forces will be, together with fire power, the flexibility and mobility needed for guerrilla warfare and in order to command the enemy rear; it is planned for the latter to use air transport and particularly helicopters.

Because of the characteristics of the theatre of operations, and the nature of certain zones still occupied by the Viet Minh, it is also planned that certain units would receive amphibious training. Arrangements have already been undertaken to set up an amphibious command and for the specialization of several units (for example, river flotillas).

In a general way, cooperation between the air force and navy will be pushed to the maximum.

The logistic support of this ensemble of surface defense forces and battle corps will be provided by a territorial infrastructure of the services (i.e., presumably area service commands). The national armies and the French forces are cooperating in the setting up of battle corps and the territorial organization of the services.

For the purpose:

On the one hand, of a close coordination of methods, and to seek the greatest efficiency, it is very much hoped to have a centralized direction of instruction and combat training, both for the national armies and the French forces,

And—on the other hand, for economy, it is greatly desired to pool certain French and local means of logistic support for the armies.

C. *Timetable.*

1. The above note has not established a rigorous timetable for the operations to be conducted henceforward. Such a timetable cannot be considered, because account must be taken of the actions and reactions of the enemy; however, it will be noted that July and August have already seen the carrying out of operations predicted in paragraphs "primo" of General Navarre's note:

—the initiative has been seized by:
—local offensives in central Vietnam (Quang Tri, Phan Thiet),
—command and guerrilla operations (Langson, and operations on the Annam Coast).

2. On the other hand, there has been established a timetable for the development of national armies and the concomitant setting up of battle corps. The units for the French and local battle corps will only in fact become available:

—on the one hand, when most of the surface defense missions have been turned over to the light battalions for which various stages of establishment are programmed;
—on the other hand, when the personnel and matériel intended for the technical support units of the groups and divisions (artillery, communications, matériel etc.) have arrived at hand.

A timetable for the setting up of battle corps was given to the General O'Daniel mission at Saigon on July 8, 1953. There is attached hereto a copy of this document[8] which was recently modified by General Navarre. But it can be clearly stated that the organization (of units) planned for the third quarter of 1953 has been advanced and increased in order to prepare for any eventuality at the beginning of autumn, 1953.

In addition the arrival of temporary reenforcements provided by France will very shortly permit the increase before the first quarter of 1954, the number of infantry groups.

Annex B

Memorandum Prepared by the Department of State

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

Recommendations for procedure in furnishing an additional $385 million of MSP aid for support of military operations in Indo-China.

The Department of State and the Foreign Operations Administration consider it feasible to use $385 million to carry out the Program of Additional Aid for increased military effort in Indo-China. The amount that can be transferred by the President, under Section 513 (*a*) of the Mutual Security Act of 1951, as amended, from European military end-item funds to the Associated States for military and other support assistance is at least $317 million. This amount is 10% of the total of new military funds appropriated and unobligated balances of military funds reappropriated by the Mutual Security Appropriations Act, 1954. Under a broader construction of Section 513 (*a*) transfer authority, the 10% transfer factor might be applied to a base composed not only of new military funds appropriated and unobligated balances reappropriated but also of military funds obligated in previous fiscal years but still unexpended. Under this broader construction, the 10% amount would be far in excess of $317 million. However, the legal question of whether this broader construction of Section 513 (*a*) is permissible requires closer study. Before it could be used as a firm basis for planning, consultation would have to be had with Comptroller General and/or appropriate Congressional Committees. For purposes of the new $385 million aid program for the Associated

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[8] The document under reference accompanies neither the source text nor the official French language copy of Annex 4. The text of the latter indicates that the July timetable was *not* being attached. (Despatch 938 from Paris, Oct. 2, 1953: 751G.5 MSP/10–253)

States, it is recommended that we count on a transfer from European military funds, under Section 513(*a*), of an amount within the $317 million total that is clearly available from a legal point of view. The balance of the $385 million can be met either by the use of up to $100 million of regular Title III military funds, or by requesting that the French expend $80 million worth of franc counterpart funds, not now committed for other purposes, for this program; or by a combination of funds from both sources.

Transfers of funds for military purposes under Section 513(*a*) must be reported by the President to the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees and also to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the House.

We can assume that it will be legally possible for the Foreign Operations Administration, using military end-item funds, to carry out substantially the program envisaged in the French memorandum of September 1, 1953. However, because of the extraordinary nature and magnitude of the proposed program, it is desirable to have consultation with appropriate members of each of the following Congressional Committees:

Senate Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Appropriations; House Foreign Affairs, Armed Services, Appropriations.

In addition to being given a general description of the proposed program and the reasons therefor, these Congressional leaders should be advised that some of the funds may be used directly for troop pay of native forces in Indo-China. While the legislative history of the foreign aid legislation indicates opposition by members of the Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations Committees to the use of Mutual Security program funds directly for troop pay, Section 303(*a*) of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act contains exceptionally broad authority to expend military funds in "the general area of China" for any form of assistance that will help achieve the policies and purposes of the MDA Act.

A further item to be covered in consultations with Congress concerns the technique of furnishing this additional aid. It should be pointed out that consideration is being given to the possibility of channeling all or the bulk of the additional military aid for Indo-Chinese forces through the French Government in order to achieve proper accounting for funds. It is important that the reasons for the use of this procedure be explained to the Congressional leaders, since the House Foreign Affairs Committee stated in its report on the new legislation that "It is the hope of the Committee that more aid will go directly to the forces of the three Associated States rather than funneling all the aid through the French."

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 161st Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, September 9, 1953[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 161st Council meeting were the following: The Vice President of the United States, presiding; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration;[2] the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Acting Director, Bureau of the Budget;[3] the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission;[4] the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Robert R. Bowie, Department of State; Douglas MacArthur, II, Department of State; Elbert P. Tuttle, Department of the Treasury; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President;[5] Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the Acting White House Staff Secretary; Gerald D. Morgan and Bryce Harlow, White House Staff; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

Following is a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

1. *Further United States Support for France and the Associated States of Indochina* (Memos for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated August 5,[6] and September 8, 1953;[7] NSC Action No. 874)[8]

After Mr. Cutler had summarized previous Council action on this problem, and read the recommendations in the State Department report, he suggested that the Vice President call first on Secretary Dulles.

Secretary Dulles said that ever since the August 6 action of the National Security Council regarding Indochina, the State Department had been working very actively with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Department of Defense, and Mr. Stassen, on the problem of Indochina. The task of bringing the French to make an increased effort in Indochina had been difficult, since the prevailing mood in France, especially in the Chamber of Deputies, was to get out of Indochina. The French parliament was at the moment in recess, and Secretary Dulles hoped it would remain so; but there was always the danger that it would be summoned back, in which case the Indochinese question would become a political football in parliamentary debate.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Sept. 10.

[2] Harold E. Stassen.

[3] Rowland R. Hughes.

[4] Lewis L. Strauss.

[5] Sherman Adams.

[6] Reference is to the report by the Department of State (circulated by memorandum of Aug. 5), p. 714.

[7] *Supra.*

[8] Of Aug. 6, p. 718.

Secretary Dulles expressed his firm conviction that Premier Laniel was really disposed to make this additional effort in Indochina. Thus for the first time we have a French Government which sees the necessity of building strength in Indochina. Likewise for the first time, we have a French commanding general, Navarre, with a dynamic approach to the military problem in Indochina. General Navarre's new plan of campaign calls for the sending of nine fresh battalions, together with supporting units, to Indochina. If the plan is carried out, local forces in Indochina would be increased by the end of the calendar year by 68,000 men.

Equally important, said Secretary Dulles, was the fact that the French Government have recently given promises of political independence to the Associated States, which the United States Government thinks is essential for the success of the total program. In the long run, said Secretary Dulles, the Indochina area cannot be held except by the people of the Associated States.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, continued Secretary Dulles, have reviewed General Navarre's plan, and, according to Secretary Dulles' understanding, the Joint Chiefs considered the plan practical and feasible. Accordingly, the problem of financing the plan would now seem to be the last major obstacle to putting it into effect. Speed is of the essence. It was important to start the plan in motion before the return of the French parliament and in order to get the additional forces out to Indochina in readiness for the resumption of hostilities at the end of the rainy season in October. The French hoped to start these forces on their way at the end of September, so that they would have arrived in Indochina by the end of October.

The problem, therefore, is essentially a financial problem, since the French have indicated inability to carry out the new program unless the United States is prepared to assume a much larger share of the total cost, namely, $385 million in addition to funds already programmed by the United States for Indochina. The decision as to where this money will come from, said Secretary Dulles, is primarily a decision for Mr. Stassen and for Mr. Hughes of the Bureau of the Budget. Clearly, however, this would involve recourse to the transfer powers of the President.

Secretary Dulles then informed the Council that in the course of his conversation with the President in Denver the previous Monday,[9] the latter had indicated his general approval of the State Department's proposals to assist the French to make this new effort. This does not mean, added Secretary Dulles, that all the details of this assistance have been crystallized. The NSC was free to discuss these. It was simply that the President had indicated that the solution of the Indochina problem was a first priority, coming after Korea if not now actually before it. The President had stated his belief that the loss of Indochina could not be insulated, and that that loss would, shortly after, cost us the rest of Southeast Asia. Korea, on the other hand, might be an insulated loss. The President, said Secretary Dulles, had also commented on the great desirability of concentrating our funds and resources on the most important objectives, so far as the law of the land permitted. If the Congress would go along with this proposed concentration of effort on cleaning up the situation in French Indochina, we would be able to get real results. The President added that he assumed that there would be careful consultation with members of the appropriate Congressional committees, so that they would not be taken by surprise or feel that they had been presented with an accomplished fact. If such conferences were carefully arranged, the President believed that the Congress would support the proposed use of the Presidential transfer powers.

Secretary Dulles then predicted that it would probably take two or even three years to achieve a real decision in the Indochina war. A marked improvement in the situation, however, would be visible much sooner. He expressed the belief that this U. S. assistance might very well induce the Chinese Communists to renounce their aid to the Vietminh. It was with this objective in mind, he went on, that he had made his statement (approved in advance by the President) in his speech at St. Louis, which indicated that if the Chinese Communists overtly intervened in the Indochina war, the consequences would be grave and might not be confined to Indochina itself. The French, Secretary Dulles pointed out, have long feared the contingency of Chinese intervention, and have used this fear as an argument in favor of giving up in Indochina, or at least going slowly in their campaign. It was with the objective of making Chinese Communist intervention less likely that he had made his statement, and Secretary Dulles enumerated possible actions by the United States to execute this threat which the Chinese Communists would not find pleasant to contemplate. In any case, Secretary Dulles expressed his conviction that his

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[9] See footnote 5, p. 750. No additional record of the discussion between Secretary Dulles and President Eisenhower on Sept. 7 has been identified.

St. Louis statement had done much to encourage the French to make a new effort in Indochina.

As to the financial problem, Secretary Dulles expressed the opinion that if the additional $385 million accomplishes what we hope and think possible, namely, a reversal of the previous French attitude, the prospect of victory, or the postponement of imminent defeat, it would be the "cheapest money we ever spent." If we don't spend the money the French will certainly get out of Indochina promptly, and the whole area will be immediately overrun by the Communists, and neighboring areas as well. Such a contingency would call for far larger U. S. expenditures than were currently contemplated.

In conclusion, Secretary Dulles stated that he had no doubt that the course he was now advocating before the Council was the course which the Council had approved in principle on August 6, and that it was a sound course. He expressed the hope that considerations of national security would outweigh the technical difficulties of finding the money, and he hoped that the National Security Council at its present meeting would act in such fashion as to enable the State Department to give the French the green light to go ahead. He was certain that if this happened the State Department could readily work out the detailed agreements with the French on the expenditure of the funds.

Finally, said Secretary Dulles, if the new French effort in Indochina succeeded, it would increase rather than decrease the level of French support for NATO.

The Vice President commented, at the end of Secretary Dulles' statement, that American stakes in French Indochina were obviously very great indeed—so great that the risk must be taken that the new French plan would not work. Indeed, what troubled him, said the Vice President, was the adequacy of the $385 million. Ought we to indicate a willingness to do more?

Secretary Dulles replied that the President had thought that in the forthcoming talks with the Congressional leaders about Indochina we should warn them that we might have to come back for a supplemental request of the magnitude of perhaps $100 million. Accordingly, the President apparently thought that we might need more than the $385 million.

The Vice President then inquired whether Secretary Dulles thought that the French plan could be carried out with the $385 million grant of assistance. Was this amount of money actually available?

Secretary Dulles replied that the $385 million was available under present law and appropriations.

The Vice President then inquired the views of the military as to the adequacy of this amount.

In reply, Admiral Radford pointed out that the French had never said that this amount was all that they needed to achieve their objectives. They had merely indicated that this amount was required for the calendar year.

Secretary Dulles supported Admiral Radford's statement, and warned that we might require a comparable amount from the Fiscal 1955 budget. He went on to point out that the French program was limited not only by considerations of money, but by the physical capacity of the French to spend money wisely. $385 million would be sufficient to finance as large an effort as the French were physically able to make. This judgment was confirmed by Admiral Radford.

Secretary Humphrey then stood up and said that he was obliged to leave the Council to make a speech, but before leaving he wished to go on record that, subject to the working out of the details, it was his view that the United States had no option but to proceed promptly with this program in Indochina. No time should be lost.

(Secretary Humphrey then left the Cabinet Room, and his place was taken by Mr. Tuttle.)

Mr. Hughes, speaking for the Bureau of the Budget, pointed out that the sum of $385 million was the figure supplied by the French Government in terms of francs, and that it had not yet been screened by any American officials.

Mr. Stassen reported that in response to the August 6 decision of the Council he and his people had tried to find ways and means of meeting this request for financial assistance out of FY 1954 Mutual Security funds, pointing out that this procedure would be much more satisfactory to the French than a commitment to assist them which would be conditioned by a future appeal to the Congress for supplemental funds. In the course of conferring on how best to secure this sum, Mr. Stassen said that he and his colleagues had reached the decision that it was impossible to re-screen the French figure at the present time. He therefore proposed, by use of the Presidential transfer powers, to transfer some $317 million from Title I. The impact of such a transfer, said Mr. Stassen, would fall most heavily on the future lead time of Army end items for NATO. To secure the remainder of the $385 million, recourse could be had to two possible sources: First, French franc counterpart funds; and second, transfer of funds from Title III, earmarked in the appropriations for Far East military assistance. Mr. Stassen stressed the vital importance of consultation with the appropriate members of Congress on this problem, and also added that under the proposed transfer procedures it would be unwise to make a lump sum payment to the French. It would be much more sensible to make specific payments to them as they incurred specific expenses in carrying out the new program in French Indochina. In short, we must have demonstrated expenditures by the French before we made payments to cover these expenses. Only thus could we be sure that the money was being used by the French in the fashion agreed to by us when we agreed to assist them. For these reasons, Mr. Stassen suggested amendments in the language of the present report which would make his point clear.

Secretary Dulles replied that this procedure did not seem wholly satisfactory to him. He pointed out that the figure of $385 million had been reached with the understanding that it did not cover merely the cost of the additional French effort in Indochina, but that $100 million of the $385 million was designed to help pay the cost of the current French effort in Indochina, notably the cost of training and equipping native troops.

Secretary Dulles' reply to Mr. Stassen and the latter's rebuttal involved the Council in a lengthy discussion of the precise purpose for which the $385 [million] was intended, which discussion was concluded by a statement by Mr. Stassen to the effect that what the United States ought to be prepared to finance was what the French Government had set down in its September 1 memorandum to the United States Government. Certainly, said Mr. Stassen, we don't want any open-ended commitment to the French.

After agreeing to changes of language to clarify this point, Mr. Cutler asked Admiral Radford for the judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to the adequacy of General Navarre's new military plan.

Admiral Radford replied that the Joint Chiefs believed that the success of this forthcoming French effort would largely depend on the skill and effectiveness with which it was carried out by the French and the native troops in Indochina. Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs firmly believed that we ought to support the Navarre plan. Speaking personally, Admiral Radford observed that he had been close to the problem of Indochina for at least four years, and that this was the first time that the political climate had actually improved to a point where military success could be achieved. With aggressive implementation of the Navarre plan, Admiral Radford predicted that the war in Indochina could be reduced in scale to mere guerrilla operations in the course of a single season of fighting—certainly in two such seasons. He personally felt that we could not spend this amount of money to better advantage anywhere else in the world.

Secretary Wilson then addressed to Admiral Radford a question as to the likelihood of Chinese Communist intervention.

Admiral Radford replied that fear of this intervention explained why the French had been dragging their feet, but expressed the belief that the Secretary of State had put the Chinese Communists on notice in his recent speech, and he did not believe that the Chinese would come in. In any case, they would find such intervention extremely difficult as long as we controlled the sea, since the land transportation system and the terrain would make the land approach very difficult for large-scale intervention.

Mr. Cutler commented that if some of the money in question was to be used to pay native troops, this fact should be carefully explained to the Congress.

Mr. Stassen confirmed that such expenditures for troop pay were indeed contemplated, and agreed with Mr. Cutler that this point should be gone over carefully with the Congressional leaders.

Mr. Cutler then pointed out that at the August 6 meeting the President had expressed a willingness to release the French battalion in Korea for service in Indochina. Was this battalion, he inquired, one of the nine called for by the Navarre plan? Secretary Dulles replied in the affirmative.

After further discussion of changes in the text of the subject report in order to provide for greater flexibility in securing the requisite money, Mr. Cutler expressed the view that any attempt to secure written assurances from the French Government that in return for this assistance it would press for French agreement to ratify the EDC treaties, would be a mistake. Any such written assurances would be certain to leak out, and would cause the Laniel government great embarrassment.

Mr. Cutler then referred to the ways and means of approaching the key Congressional leaders on this problem, since it was necessary to move rapidly and most Congressmen were out of town.

Mr. Stassen said that a major effort would be required to convene conferences with the appropriate members of Congress. He said that he planned to see Congressman Taber[10] himself, but added that other members of the Council and of the White House Staff should be called in to assist in the task. He indicated that it would take at least three days to go through this process.

Mr. Cutler then inquired as to how the United States assistance to the French Government would be revealed. Should it be announced by our Government, or by the French Government? Or would it just leak out?

Secretary Dulles replied that Premier Laniel would have to make some kind of a statement about this next week, but such a statement should not be made until after the conclusion of the Congressional conferences. Thereafter the announcement might well take the form of a joint US–French statement by the President and Premier Laniel. Plans to meet this problem were still in flux.

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[10] Representative John Taber of New York, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Secretary Wilson stated his understanding that the program of assistance to the French Government for Indochina was something that we would go ahead with regardless of the conferences with the Congressmen.

Mr. Stassen replied that the objective of the conferences was to inform the members of Congress fully as to our proposal, but not actually to ask their permission to carry it out.

Secretary Dulles concurred in Mr. Stassen's view that the President had the legal right to invoke his transfer powers, adding, however, that it was vastly important to assure ourselves of the good will and understanding of the Congressional leaders and not to take them by surprise.

After further discussion of plans to contact the appropriate Congressional leaders, the Vice President expressed the view that the announcement of our proposed move should be made as dramatically as possible at the right time, and not be permitted to leak out.

Secretary Dulles agreed on the vital importance of avoiding a leak, not only because of unfortunate repercussions in the United States, but likewise in France.

Mr. MacArthur expressed the opinion that the announcement should be handled in such fashion as to provide Premier Laniel with maximum support in France for a course of action which was politically very risky for him.[11]

The National Security Council:[12]

a. Noted and discussed the memorandum from the Department of State on the subject enclosed with the reference memorandum of September 8, 1953, including the September 1 memorandum from the French Government and the report that the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, concur in the opinion that the proposed

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[11] In telegram 977 from Paris, Sept. 9, Ambassador Dillon reported that Germain Vidal, director of Premier Laniel's personal staff, had expressed the fear that there had been "a French indiscretion," and that a substantially accurate account of the situation regarding additional aid for Indochina would appear in the French press the following day. (751G.5 MSP/9-953) The *New York Times* of Sept. 10, page 2, dateline Paris, Sept. 9, reported that the National Security Council was considering a French request for $385 million. At the Secretary of State's staff meeting held on the morning of Sept. 10, Thruston B. Morton, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, reported that the results of yesterday's NSC meeting regarding Indochina had leaked to the press, rendering Congressional consultation on the subject less effective. (Secretary's Staff Meetings, lot 63 D 75) At the Department of State daily news conference on Sept. 10, Lincoln White, Deputy Director of the News Division, refused specific comment on the *New York Times* report. (ON files, lot 60 D 641) On Sept. 11, the *New York Times* further reported (page 1, dateline Washington, Sept. 10) that the French request had been approved by the NSC.

[12] Paragraphs *a* and *b* below constituted NSC Action No. 897 of Sept. 9, 1953 (S/S-NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions"), subsequently approved by the President, and circulated to the National Security Council by Executive Secretary Lay by memorandum of Sept. 11, 1953; for text, see *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Book 9, pp. 153-155.

French program holds promise of success and can be implemented effectively.

b. Agreed to recommend to the President:

(1) The granting of additional assistance, not to exceed $385 million or its equivalent in local currency, as requested by the French, on the following basis:

(*a*) The United States Government should obtain assurances to the effect that the French Government is determined:

(i) To put promptly into effect the program of action set forth in its memorandum of September 1.
(ii) To carry this program forward vigorously with the object of eliminating regular enemy forces in Indochina.
(iii) To continue to pursue the policy of perfecting independence of the Associated States, in conformity with the July 3 announcement.
(iv) To facilitate exchange of information with American military authorities and to take into account their views in developing and carrying out French military plans in Indochina.
(v) To assure that no basic or permanent alteration of plans and programs for NATO forces will be made as a result of the additional effort in Indochina.
(vi) To provide appropriate information to the United States Government of the amounts of the expenditures for the military program indicated in the September 1 memorandum from the French Government.

(*b*) The United States Government should make clear to the French Government that:

(i) The appropriately established financial requirements for the military program as indicated in the September 1 memorandum from the French Government, not to exceed $385 million in Calendar Year 1954, will be provided by the United States Government.
(ii) The amount of $385 million is deemed to satisfy in full the request made by the French memorandum of September 1.
(iii) No further financial assistance may be expected for Calendar Year 1954.
(iv) The United States Government retains the right to terminate this additional assistance should for any reason the French Government plan as outlined in the memorandum of September 1 prove incapable of execution or should other unforeseen circumstances arise which negate the understandings arrived at between the two governments based in paragraphs (*a*) and (*b*) herein.

(2) The provision of this additional assistance, to the extent necessary through the use of the President's transfer powers, in conformity with Annex B of the enclosure to the reference memorandum of September 8, 1953, or otherwise.

Note: The recommendation in *b* above, as subsequently approved by the President, transmitted to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration for implementation.[13]

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[13] Executive Secretary Lay's memorandum of transmittal Sept. 10, is not printed. (S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351)

Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 163

United States Minutes of the Second Session of the Second Meeting of the ANZUS Council, Washington, September 9, 1953, 2:30 p. m.[1]

SECRET

WAM M-2

[Here follow a list of those present (30) and the record of discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

Indochina

The Secretary said that the situation in Indochina has given the Administration great concern. It would be difficult to limit the consequences of a disaster in Indochina. He noted how important these consequences would be for Australia and New Zealand. Siam, Northern Malaya, Burma and Indonesia would all go if Indochina were lost. The possibility of salvaging the situation has at times looked extremely gloomy since a combination of three elements was needed:

(*a*) French willingness to make a more vigorous military effort and commit more forces, in the face of French public opinion in favor of liquidating the war.

(*b*) French willingness to grant a large degree of independence to the native peoples in order to increase their part in the struggle, without which it is doubtful if the struggle can be won.

(*c*) A decision as to whether it would be worthwhile even to make the effort, in view of the likelihood that even if it succeeded it would be a passing success since 300,000 Chinese Communists could always move in as they had in North Korea.

The situation still has not been resolved, but there still seems to be a fair chance that it may be. The French have taken far-reaching steps toward granting independence. These are actually being felt as a result of the July 3 declaration. General Navarre is taking a dynamic approach, reversing the previous static policy. We feel that the character of the war can be changed if the French are given the means to do it. The question is whether or not General Navarre can get the necessary backing from Paris in this regard.

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[1] The Second Meeting of the ANZUS Council was held in Washington, Sept. 9–10, 1953. Those present at the Second Session included, for the United States, Secretary of State Dulles, Assistant Secretaries Merchant and Robertson, and Counselor of the Department MacArthur; for Australia, Richard G. Casey, Minister for External Affairs, and Sir Percy Spender, Ambassador to the United States; and for New Zealand, T. Clifton Webb, Minister for External Affairs, and Leslie K. Munro, Ambassador to the United States.

For additional documentation on the Second Meeting of the ANZUS Council, see volume XII. Unpublished minutes, background papers, and other material on the conference are in Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 163.

The Secretary referred to his speech in St. Louis last week, which had been approved by the President and the Joint Chiefs, in which he stated that Chinese Communist aggression could not occur in Indochina without grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina. He felt that that statement will suffice to keep the Chinese Communists out and get the French to act more vigorously. If the Chinese Communists did move in in force, it might very possibly enlarge the area of military action there and involve a larger role for Chiang's forces. The Secretary said his statement was intended as a deterrent, to prevent miscalculation. While recognizing the serious problems faced by France, the Secretary said he thought there was a better chance of holding the area than seemed possible some months ago.

Mr. Webb suggested that General Gentry[2] might add a few words since he had just been there. General Gentry stated that there had been no change in the disposition of Chinese Communist forces and that we would have some warning if there were because of their airfields. He said that the French officers are full of confidence in the new regime and that General Navarre had volunteered to him that short of Chinese Communist intervention he would have the situation well under control within a year. General Gentry himself thought two years would be more likely.

The Secretary agreed on the two years and said that an advantage will be missed if the French troops do not go ahead in the fighting season which opens up in a few days. He acknowledged that the other side was better prepared and that we may have temporary disappointments.

General Gentry stated that it was clear to him that the French are not going to leave the initiative to the Viet Minh. He had been shown the Vietnamese National Army which is being put together and said that some elements may be good in a few months but that it would be 18–24 months before the Vietnamese Army is really effective and the French can pull out.

The Secretary said that anything the Australians or New Zealanders could do to help out would be to the good.

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[2] Maj. Gen. W. G. Gentry, Chief of the General Staff of New Zealand.

Mr. Webb said that that was the purpose of General Gentry's visit. General Gentry added that he had offered the French supplies and they had seemed very pleased.

Mr. Casey asked if the danger was not from the French weakening rather than from a Viet Minh offensive.

The Secretary replied in the affirmative, adding that he was sure the French could win. However, they were probably more concerned with the effects of their actions in Indochina on the situation in North Africa.

Ambassador Munro asked what would happen if the French simply withdrew from Indochina.

The Secretary said that we have been concentrating on preventing such a situation from becoming a reality and have hopes that it will not, but that we had plans for such a contingency.

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[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

751G.5 MSP/9–753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET
PRIORITY

WASHINGTON, September 9, 1953—8:06 p. m.

868. Limit distribution.

1. Subject to our receiving necessary assurances from French, NSC today approved additional aid proposed for Indochina based on substance Deptel 827, with Presidential approval expected tomorrow. Comments urtels 939, 940, 941 fully taken into account in presentation to NSC.[2]

2. On most confidential basis you should therefore now informally advise Laniel and Bidault above action and indicate assurances desired are to effect that French Government is determined:

a. put promptly into effect program of action set forth its memorandum Sept 1;[3]

b. carry this program forward vigorously with object of eliminating regular enemy forces in Indochina;

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[1] Drafted by Edgar J. Beigel of the Office of Western European Affairs and William J. Galloway, Special Assistant to the Counselor, Douglas MacArthur II.

[2] Telegram 827 to Paris, Sept. 5, containing the text of a draft memorandum to the French Government concerning additional U.S. aid for Indochina, is not printed. (751G.5 MSP/9–553) Regarding telegram 939 from Paris, Sept. 7, see footnote 1, p. 758. Telegram 940 from Paris, Sept. 7, transmitting technical comments on the draft memorandum contained in telegram 827 to Paris, is not printed. (751G.5 MSP/9–753) For text of telegram 941 from Paris, Sept. 7, see p. 758.

[3] For text, see p. 770.

c. continue pursue policy of perfecting independence of Associated States in conformity with July 3 declaration;

d. facilitate exchange information with American military authorities and take into account their views in developing and carrying out French military plans Indochina;

e. assure that no basic or permanent alteration of plans and programs for NATO forces will be made as result of additional effort Indochina;

f. provide appropriate info to US Govt of amount of expenditures for military program set forth in memo of Sept 1.

3. We would expect these assurances be embodied in note which US in reply would acknowledge. US reply would go on to make clear that:

a. appropriately established financial requirements for military program as indicated in Sept 1 memo from French Govt, not to exceed $385 million or its equivalent in Calendar Year 1954, will be met by US Govt (see para 8 below);

b. amount of $385 million or its equivalent in francs or piasters is deemed to satisfy in full request made by French memo of Sept 1;

c. no further financial assistance may be expected for Calendar Year 1954;

d. US Govt retains right to terminate this additional assistance should for any reason French Govt plan as outlined in memo of Sept 1 prove incapable of execution or should other unforeseen circumstances arise which negate the understandings arrived at between the two govts.

4. You should immediately begin informally to work out language with French covering paragraph 2 above. (We will cable soonest new draft of US reply.) It should be made crystal clear to French that final US Govt agreement will be given only when satisfactory language for exchange notes has been obtained.

5. During time you are working out exchange with French, Administration will inform interested leaders both houses Congress since new program involves important change in orientation foreign aid program as enacted by Congress. We have begun and will continue work on this phase of matter with greatest urgency and hope have it completed by time you wind up negotiations with French. Please impress on your French colleagues overriding necessity maintain complete secrecy on all aspects this matter until Congressional leaders informed and negotiations actually completed and notes exchanged between two govts.

6. It was agreed by NSC there should also be assurances from French Govt re intention move ahead on EDC, but that for various reasons such assurances need not necessarily be contained in formal notes exchanged between govts. Would like your current views on how most satisfactory assurances can best be obtained.

7. While procedures whereby payments to French or Associated

States will be made will have to be worked out, it is important that French understanding clearly our basic approach to this additional aid—US is agreeing to finance a specific action program up to an agreed dollar figure. Consequently, we will pay or reimburse French or Associated States on basis of agreed franc and/or piaster expenditures as they occur at rates of exchange then current. US should receive benefit any reduced costs resulting from screening, devaluation, or other causes. Appropriate safeguards will be included in US note. FOA will forward details of suggested procedures shortly.

8. We have very serious problem finding 385 million and unless there are compelling reasons to contrary we would plan to release counterpart accruing Calendar Year 1954 (now estimated $70–80 million) to help meet total. Realize French may be counting on this counterpart for other purposes but trust you will be able reach agreement along these lines. This connection, would like to know lines French thinking on how they would present US aid figures to parliament, whether as separate amount outside regular French budget for 1954 or as item only on resources side as shown heretofore.

9. Will expect you keep us currently informed regarding negotiations on language of note.

10. Copy memo submitted NSC being pouched FYI. Copy NSC action paper will follow soonest. Will inform Heath separately of developments.

FYI, current planning envisages following MSP sources for $385 million:

1. $70–80 million MSA counterpart accruing in Calendar Year 1954;
2. Rescreening of Fiscal Year 1954 French MDAP program;
3. Rescreening of Fiscal Year 1954 Indochina MDAP program;
4. Transfer of Title I and possibly II MDAP funds from Defense to FOA (thereby possibly reducing amount of regular OSP that NATO countries including France could otherwise have received).

DULLES

751G.00/9–953

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] September 9, 1953.

Subject: Alternatives in Indochina

I refer to Mr. Ogburn's memorandum of September 8[2] on the above subject. I think that perhaps the brief condensed paragraphs which

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[1] A copy was transmitted to Charlton Ogburn of FE.

[2] *Ante*, p. 762.

I contributed to the Solarium Project do not sufficiently cover the ground.

If the Navarre plan with its political concomitant, the establishment of a viable non-Communist government in Viet-Nam fails, we will be confronted with (*a*) sending U.S. troops to Indochina to hold the country, or (*b*) letting Indochina go the way of China. Therefore, we must not let the Navarre plan fail. No one can now decide, it seems to me, whether the conditions of its failure would be such as to create a situation in which our bosses, the Congress and people of the U.S., would permit the sending of U.S. troops to the area.

The alternative to any plan which leaves the Communist dominated regular divisions undefeated is a turn-over of the country to the Communists no matter how you camouflage it with plebiscites or U.N. supervision or negotiations. Both our military people and the French military people disagree with Mr. Ogburn's view as to the probable impossibility of the French being able to eliminate the regular enemy divisions. There is of course no such thing as certainty in war. Nevertheless, the increase of Gen. Navarre's striking force to a point where the enemy could be denied fertile and populated territory which he now occupies and from which he draws much of his strength in manpower and food, and the disruption of the enemy's major supply routes seem to present a good chance of success and one which the Joint Chiefs are ready to back.

The third alternative presented by Mr. Ogburn would under present circumstances merely be a slight camouflage of a free world defeat in Indochina. I do not believe that the Communists would permit a political solution acceptable to us in Indochina as long as they have their present military strength. The possibility that at some time in the future the U.N. solution, after the French and Vietnamese have achieved military successes in Indochina, might be an acceptable face-saver for a Communist defeat may be worth studying when the time comes. At the present time, however, such ideas, prevalent in certain French and Vietnamese circles and including the concept of negotiations, merely represent attempts to camouflage the defeat which I do not believe we are ready to accept or to regard as inevitable. Consideration of such ideas also tends to distract the French and others from the immediate task at hand—the carrying out of the Navarre concept.

751G.00/9–1153: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, September 11, 1953—6 p. m.

432. Repeated information Paris 118, Hanoi unnumbered. President Tam returned from Paris yesterday evening. There was record turn-

out at airport and by no means all of those present were there because of orders or pressing "invitations" from government. Doctor Tan, director of Vietnam Presse, told me that many had come out because they thought that Tam's political stock was rising again.

I saw Tam this morning. He seemed to have recaptured his customary optimism and self-confidence. He thought the idea of Congress was bad one but, since idea had been launched, he was confident he could organize and manage it so it did not go off the rails. Bao Dai and his advisers who had decided on the convocation of this Congress had become frightened by recent scarcely veiled anti-Bao Dai sentiments voiced by some of nationalist proponents of Congress in Vietnam. Tam intimated without directly saying so that in face of this development Bao Dai was very glad that Tam was still heading government.

Tam had suggested to Bao Dai that Congress be chosen from among 3,000 municipal and village councillors elected last January. Bao Dai had vetoed that suggestion. Tam had then insisted on written instructions from Bao Dai outlining the scope and functions of Congress. Bao Dai had given him these instructions which included fact that Congress should consist of 200 members selected from among political parties and these very religious groups. Although Bao Dai had instructed him to organize Congress with least possible delay, Tam had no sooner reached Saigon than he found telegram from Imperial Cabinet directing him to postpone preparations until decree setting up Congress could be issued by Imperial Council. Tam told me he was disregarding this instruction, which he felt was result of some "intriguing" by Buu Loc who is shortly to arrive here to help him form Congress.

Delay would give anti-Bao Dai and anti-government forces time to start intriguing and plotting.

Tam said he had no fear at all that Congress would develop into movement for revolutionary change or forum for anti-French sentiments. He said he would allow widest representation in Congress but that he would inform members clearly from start that there were two things on which they must take no action and only one function for them to perform. They must not take action on subject of independence since that had been accorded by French declaration of July 3. They must take no action on question of Vietnam's membership in French Union because that had been decided affirmatively by Bao Dai. He would allow expression of individual views on question of independence and membership in French Union but it was beyond competence of this Congress to adopt formal resolution or recommendations on these subjects. Task of Congress was to agree on panel of 20 Vietnamese from whom Bao Dai could select members of his delegation to negotiate new arrangements with France. He said to me that if Congress got out of hand, attempted to become constitutional convention or agitated against government he would not hesitate to use military and police power to dissolve it. He felt confident that no such action would be necessary.

HEATH

Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, lot 64 D 199

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Knight)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] September 11, 1953.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: The Secretary
Mr. Ridgway B. Knight, WE
M. Mendes-France [1]

[Here follows a brief account of discussion regarding the possibility of a meeting between the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, with the leaders of the Soviet Union.]

The Secretary expressed the deep interest of the United States in Indochina and pointed to the great importance both to France and the entire Free World of a successful outcome to this painful and long-drawn-out war, which had not only constituted a hemorrhage for France but had been a source of much of the reluctance with which the French people considered the EDC and their association with Germany therein. It seems, however, that for the first time the elements are now assembled which should permit defeating the enemy's organized resistance and perhaps more important than the reinforcement to the fighting forces in Indochina and the stepped-up program for the armies of the Associated States is the farsighted decision made by the French Government to grant independence to the Associated States. This should remove the mask from the Viet Minh and reveal it as the instrument of international Communism which it is. Referring to the possibility of increased Chinese support for the Viet Minh, the Secretary said that of course no one could forecast what the decision of the Communist masters would be but that he considered that under the circumstances there was just as much reason for a decision to cease hostilities as to step them up. The Secretary referred to his St. Louis speech and told M. Mendes-France that in his opening statement before the General Assembly [2] he would call in vigorous terms for a cessation of Communist aggression in Indochina as a proof of Soviet peaceful intentions. Finally the Secretary said that he would not be surprised, in view of the probably advanced state of preparations and planning of the Viet Minh, should the fighting season in Indochina start badly and the Viet Minh score some initial successes during October.

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[1] Pierre Mendès-France, a leader of the French Radical Socialist Party, was on visit in the United States.

[2] See editorial note, p. 809.

The Secretary fully covered the impossibility of negotiating from weakness which could only turn into a Communist triumph and the necessity of building a situation of strength before one could think of negotiations with any possibility of success.

M. Mendes-France expressed his appreciation for the Secretary's views in the matter of Indochina. He stated his sincere hope that the current program being discussed between France and the US would succeed and made the point that he had never favored immediate negotiations. He did however express the personal opinion which he had had for a long time that a continuation of a stalemate in Indochina as a running sore in France's side with its resulting effect on EDC and the entire Atlantic alliance might conceivably best suit the Soviets. Otherwise he said, how can one explain that the Viet Minh in 1949–50 did not receive the necessary assistance to clinch victory when it was well within its grasp. Commenting on the possibility of reverses in October, M. Mendes-France expressed grave fears about their effect on French public opinion.

(Subsequently in talking to Mr. Knight, M. Mendes-France expanded at length on this point. M. Mendes-France believes that the "Laniel–Navarre program" goes directly counter to the desire of the vast majority of Frenchmen to see an end of the Indochina war, that this program will only be tolerated as long as it offers the possibility of success, and that any noteworthy reverses could therefore cause a popular "explosion", in front of which the French Government would probably be powerless. For this reason M. Mendes-France attaches the greatest significance to initial success for the forces of General Navarre.)

M. Mendes-France concluded by saying that in his opinion the difficulties of the French nation were primarily mental "which perhaps makes the situation worse as those are the illnesses most difficult to cure".

(Developing this thought later with Mr. Knight, M. Mendes-France stressed the deeply ingrained contradiction in the French mind between steadily increasing impatience over the present political situation in France and the reluctance to take any steps which might affect the vested interests of all categories of Frenchmen. He also spoke at length about the essential need for France to put her own house in order, and the resulting need for sacrifices on the part of all Frenchmen as the only means of so doing, and finally of their unwillingness to make these sacrifices as long as they had the impression that these would be wasted. He seemed to be groping for new formulas to solve these various problems but not yet to have found them.)

751H.00/9–1253 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT

SAIGON, September 12, 1953—3 p. m.
[Received 6:34 a. m.]

439. Repeated information Paris niact 121, Hanoi niact 59, Phnom Penh 7. Cambodian situation has taken serious turn for the worse. Declaration of Penn Nouth which was countersigned by King as reported my telegram 438[1] today publicly places Cambodia in ranks of neutralists and in effect invites Viet Minh and Issarak elements to join in a popular front government, since it promises "free and democratic elections" and offers amnesty up to October 1. Statement likewise dissociates Cambodia from Viet Minh operations in Vietnam. It comes immediately upon latest Cambodian military proposals as set out Phnom Penh's 33 repeated Paris 28,[2] third point of which excludes use of Cambodian battalions belonging to French Union Forces outside Cambodian territory. This is direct reversal of position taken by Cambodian King with Prince Savang of Laos when he assured latter that Cambodian units could be used for defense of Southern Laos.

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[1] Telegram 438 from Saigon, Sept. 12, read as follows:

"Following is summary translation message Cambodian Prime Minister Penn Nouth to Issaraks Khmer–Viet Minh and Viet Minh September 10, as published *Agence Khmere De Presse* Sept. 11. Statement is countersigned by King.

"Royal Government announces complete independence Cambodia is in process realization; judicial and police powers have already been transferred to Cambodian control and turn-over military power will come shortly.

"Since your ideal of Cambodian independence has already been achieved, you no longer have valid reason for remaining estranged from national community. Your refusal return to fold prevents government from raising standard living of people and exposes your activities as serving personal ambitions at expense country. Government promises complete amnesty for your former errors so that you may become free citizen. If you do not return by October 1, government will take strong action against all rebels, because it will then be punishing only traitors to country. Viet Minh, we have already obtained independence which you pretend to help us attain. Although we are not Communist, we have no reason to take sides against communism as long as it does not come to impose itself by force upon our people. Communism pretends to teach and bring liberty to our people. Royal Government reminds you that Cambodia possesses constitution that is among most democratic in world.

"We will have free elections as soon as Issaraks and Viet Minh allow us sufficient peace to make them possible.

"You must be aware that Bonzes and people will have nothing to do with communism, nor with spurious independence obliging Cambodians to recognize Ho Chi Minh, Mao Tse-Tung, and formerly Stalin as their true masters.

"Viet Minh it is not up to us to question your right to concern yourselves with Vietnam, we only ask you to leave our territory and allow us to live our lives freely. We do not wish in the least to interfere in internal affairs other countries so long as reciprocity of treatment is granted." (751H.00/9–1253)

For text of the statement, see Gouvernement Royal du Cambodge, *Livre jaune sur les revendications de l'independance du Cambodge*, II (Phnom Penh, Imprimerie du Palais Royal, 1954), pp. 57 ff.

[2] Telegram 33 from Phnom Penh, Sept. 12, reporting on French–Cambodian military negotiations, is not printed. (651.51H/9–1253)

I discussed these developments with Commanding [*Commissioner*] General DeJean last night. In his present temper, DeJean feels that French would be justified in breaking off negotiations but as of this moment no indication of attitude French Government has been received to latest Cambodian proposals. However, French here feel that offer to turn over three battalions only until next June plus interdiction on their use outside Cambodian territory, coupled now with Penn Nouth's astonishing invitation to the Viet Minh, practically vitiates further negotiations wih Cambodian Government. DeJean confirmed to me third paragraph Deptel 419 sent Phnom Penh 14, Paris 897,[3] but this report has not yet appeared in local press.

French AP stringers sent in report outlined paragraph 2, Deptel 419 but I strongly doubt that Chargé Phnom Penh made any such statement.

DeJean feels and I concur that at this critical juncture it would be useful if Senator Knowland[4] and I, who are invited to lunch with Penn Nouth on Monday,[5] should make it very clear that attitude of neutralism and of unconcern at Communist menace is but an invitation by Cambodian Government to lose that very independence which is its proclaimed desire to achieve. Situation has so deteriorated that even excellent message of President, as set out Deptel 328,[6] is now too mild. I feel that Knowland and I should likewise indicate plainly to Cambodian Prime Minister that his government cannot look to US to replace French in realm of military and economic aid if he persists in policy outlined public statement to Viet Minh and Issaraks.

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[3] Telegram 419 to Saigon, Sept. 11 (also sent to Phnom Penh and repeated to Paris), read as follows:

"Associated Press report from Phnom Penh dated September 11 states (1) Penn Nouth in broadcast addressed to Viet Minh in Cambodia reportedly approved by King, stated Cambodians have no quarrel with Communism as long as not imposed on Cambodians and that if Viet Minh would depart Cambodians would not fight them in neighboring Viet-Nam; (2) U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh warned that Cambodian 'denial of all will to fight Communism' might lead U.S. Congress cut off military and economic aid Cambodia; (3) source close to Dejean said France had no reason help Cambodia if Cambodians believe fight against Viet Minh does not concern them.

"Comment requested in light problem press inquiries and need for USIA guidance." (751H.00/9–1153)

[4] William F. Knowland, Senate Majority Leader, visited Indochina from Sept. 11 to 15.

[5] Sept. 14.

[6] In telegram 328 to Saigon, Aug. 27, the Department of State authorized Ambassador Heath to deliver an oral message to King Norodom Sihanouk along the following lines:

"President has been most favorably impressed at recent progress Cambodia and at evidence growing assumption by Cambodia of responsibilities of developing and maintaining Cambodian independence. President feels strongly that at this time conditions vital to independence of Cambodia include achievement harmonious relationship with France whereby Cambodian and French efforts will be devoted wholeheartedly to opposing common enemy. President knows difficulties of reconciling aims of national independence with fact of interdependence of free world nations in face effort by USSR to enslave them. He is confident nevertheless that high statesmanship and restraint on both sides will permit accomplishment complete reconciliation between France and Cambodia." (751H.11/8–2553)

Please instruct.

HEATH

751H.00/9–1253 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, September 12, 1953—2:22 p.m.

424. Your 439 repeated Paris 121, Hanoi 59, Phnom Penh 7.[2] Department seriously concerned at deterioration Cambodian situation. You are authorized make statements to Penn Nouth along lines final paragraph reftel. You may add that Prime Minister's attitude toward struggle against Communist attempts to enslave peoples of Southeast Asia seems particularly regrettable just at time when fresh broad generous and vigorous military and political concepts adopted by Vietnam, Laos and France with prospect greatly increased U.S. support have so much improved free world outlook in that area. You may tell Prime Minister his statement has received wide unfavorable publicity throughout United States.

. . . .

Department relies upon you to do utmost avoid any final action as distinct from mere words by French or Cambodians until we have had chance define our own position toward situation which might result from such action and effect upon enterprise of defending free world position Indochina in which we have such large stake.

Paris please inform appropriate French authorities on highly restricted confidential basis regarding above requesting them to give no press indication our attitude and seek views regarding future developments.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal, Director of PSA. Also sent niact to Paris as 926, to Hanoi as 151, and to Phnom Penh as 15.

[2] *Supra.*

751G.5 MSP/9–1353 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, September 13, 1953—5 p.m.

445. Repeated information Paris 125. Prime Minister Tam has sent us copy of letter dated September 12 to French High Commissioner Vietnam of which text in translation follows:

"Press has just announced that American National Security Council has decided to recommend to Congress grant of an extraordinary contribution of $385 million for Indochina and I do not wish this important news to pass without expressing to you in the name of His Majesty's Government my appreciation for the diplomatic success obtained by France. I shall be very grateful to you to transmit expression of our gratitude to French Government and particularly to Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defense, as-well-as to the Secretary of State to the Presidency charged with relations to Associated States, who have handled discussion with our American friends with such skill. As the result of this fortunate news, we now know that Vietnamese army will be able to carry out its development in 1954 according to the plans established by the Vietnamese General Staff and accepted by Commander-in-Chief. We have also new proof of will of US to help us and to bring to Vietnam total victory of Communism. Coming a few days after recent statements of Mr. Dulles, this indication of American determination acquires unusual value. Having means to carry on and to increase its efforts, independence Vietnam will be able to create the conditions necessary to cause the rebels to abandon a futile struggle and to agree to that peace which we all hope for from the bottom of our hearts".

HEATH

751G.5/9–1453 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, September 14, 1953—10 a. m.

163. Repeated information Saigon 111, Paris 73. In course of briefing given September 12, General Navarre told Senator Knowland that at present time French Union striking force (corps de bataille) is equivalent to about three divisions compared with Viet Minh corps de bataille of approximately seven divisions. Navarre added that by reorganizing his forces and suppressing all except indispensable static defenses, he hopes by spring of next year have corps de bataille equal to six divisions, or force capable of meeting enemy on nearly even terms at any point.

Navarre said with regard to fall campaign that there appears no doubt major operations will have begun by October 15. The only question, he said, is which side will seize initiative. Commander in Chief strongly implied that he does not intend sit by while Viet Minh make first important move. Discussing possible Viet Minh fall campaign plans, General Cogny and his staff repeated earlier statements to effect that it appears principal Viet Minh effort, or at very least major diversionary effort, will be made against Tonkin delta.

With regard to equipment needs, Navarre said that his first concern was to strengthen air transport groups. He now has sufficient DC–3's to drop two parachute battalions simultaneously; drop possibilities should be increased, he says, to three battalions plus command staff and equipment; this would require one additional squadron of Dakotas.

STURM

751H.00/9–1553 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, September 15, 1953—6 p. m.

458. Repeated information Paris 131, Phnom Penh unnumbered, Bangkok 15. For attention Senator Knowland. Senator Knowland and I had an hour and half conversation with Cambodian Prime Minister Penn Nouth yesterday. After introductory polite remarks, Senator stated that in his capacity as Majority Leader of Senate he could assure Prime Minister American Congress and American people were willing to help countries which helped themselves defend their liberties against Communism and cooperated with their neighbors in mutual defense. Prime Minister evidently on theory that best defense is to take offensive said that he felt deeply injured that Washington press had misinterpreted his declaration about Communism. It was not an expression of foreign policy of Cambodia but was made entirely for purposes of internal politics. Cambodian foreign policy had been clearly expressed on many occasions and had not changed and should not be confused with statements made for internal consumption. He avoided defining however just what was Cambodia's policy of mutual defense cooperation with its neighbors. He argued his statement was merely an invitation for Viet Minh to get out and for Issaraks to lay down their arms by October 1, and a threat that if they did not do so government would take action against them. To remark that Washington press was entirely independent and it was press own interpretation of the declaration, Penn Nouth said he could not accept that because these press attacks had "diplomatic inspiration" and, turning to Chargé Montllor,[2] who was present, accused him of having said to Foreign Minister that America would withdraw its aid if declaration were maintained. Montllor denied this immediately saying that his last talk with Foreign Minister had occurred two days before declaration was issued and before he even knew such declaration was contemplated.

Comment: Montllor explained that he had a general exploratory conversation with Foreign Minister several days ago in which he had explained concepts and policy of American aid and he believes that Foreign Minister failed to report this conversation to Prime Minister until after latter's declaration with which Foreign Minister was not in accord.

Senator Knowland remarked there was ground for confusion in American press interpretation since declaration stated that Cambodia had nothing against Communism as such. Penn Nouth replied that that was due to American misconception in regarding Indochina as a whole instead of as three separate countries with separate problems. Both Senator and I disclaimed that any such conception was entertained in Washington.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in three parts.

[2] Joseph J. Montllor.

In reply to Prime Minister's complaint that he could not make plans as Cambodia did not receive direct arms aid from US, Senator and I both stated that whether direct or indirect, aid was for the common use. Senator added that if Cambodians did not worry about Communism in neighboring countries, Americans might inquire, why should US worry about it in a country 10,000 miles away. That, he said, however, was not our policy. Prime Minister indicated that we were inclined to view the three countries as one and claimed that we have been discriminating in favor of Laos as opposed to Cambodia. He said that Laos was getting American arms for 30 battalions whereas Cambodia has only 8.

I again took issue with allegation that we consider three states as one but added that we think of one common defense. With regard to arming 30 Laotian battalions, I said no such request had ever been made but recalled that Laotian Prime Minister in talking with me two days before had spoken of putting regional forces into Laotian regular army. Laotian Prime Minister had not, however, talked in terms of anything like 30 battalions. Laotian army had at present only about 7 battalions and these were not completely armed.

Penn Nouth then asked how, with only 8 battalions in the National Army, 4 of which were under French command, they could participate and assist in general defense of Indochina. I asked about status of 5 Cambodian battalions included in Union forces. Penn Nouth replied that France had agreed to Cambodian proposal to turn the 5 battalions over to Royal Khmer Army and to proposition that 3 would then be made available to united command. He added, however, that French could have control of these troops for only a limited period although the exact limit had not been indicated. Senator then commented that it created an impossible situation for a commanding general if he did not know when the troops under him might be withdrawn. General Trapnell assented.

I asked Prime Minister if there were other limitations on use of the 3 battalions. Prime Minister replied evasively that Cambodia did not have agreements with either Laos or Vietnam regarding territorial deployment of their forces and that so long as Cambodia had not reached a full agreement with French on turning over Cambodian forces to Cambodia it was impossible to make agreements with Laos and Vietnam. He added, however, that in case of hot pursuit Cambodian troops could go over the frontiers of neighboring Associated States.

Senator then made two points: (1) that it is technique of Communism to divide and conquer and that mutual defense concept is based on mutuality of action in defense of joint interests, and (2) that security of Cambodia depends in great degree on stopping Communism before it reaches Cambodian frontier. He pointed out that US had given freedom to Philippines, Great Britain to India and Pakistan, and that now France was giving full independence to Associated States. On contrary record of Soviets is one of steady aggression and absorbing former free states. Senator commented that in his 8 years in the Senate he had constantly supported mutual defense concept in belief that the three countries were cooperating militarily and under unified command in defense against a common danger and enemy, that in all frankness he should add that if the independent states in this area are not cooperating against the enemy in a way that he had believed they were he would, as majority leader in the Senate, have to reconsider his point of view and report to President and to Senate on his findings.

I then pointed out there was real danger that Viet Minh may strike south or central Laos and that would be a direct threat to Cambodians if it is not met with a joint defense by Associated States and Union forces. Prime Minister reiterated rather pettishly that Cambodia has no agreement with Laos and asked why we did not call on Thailand, the Philippines, or other countries in this area to support Laos. He added that France has no intention of tying fate of Thailand and Laos together, whereas in this area France makes constant demands on Cambodia to support its immediate neighbors. Senator replied that so far as he knew no Thailand official had ever said that his government does not regard Communism in a neighboring country as a matter of concern to Thailand.

At this point I read pertinent passages relating to a common effort from pentalateral MDAP agreement[3] to emphasize obligation of five countries to cooperate in meeting the common threat. Penn Nouth replied even more pettishly that that agreement was only between France and US and did not really include Cambodia. I took immediate and warm issue with that statement pointing out that I personally had negotiated the agreement with Cambodia, Laos and French and [garble] changes [garble] by Cambodians and other parties. I [garble] Cambodian plan [garble] freedom in military field there was nothing that Cambodia could do. At this point conversation was broken off for lunch.

At Senator's suggestion, I saw Penn Nouth alone after lunch. I said to him that while we sympathized with Cambodia's desire for freedom and independence of action, Cambodian stand on limitations on French operational command of three battalions violated two principles which were explicit in the pentapartite agreement and our arms aid program to Indochina.

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[3] For text of the pentalateral military assistance agreement signed at Saigon, Dec. 23, 1950, see *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements* (UST), 1952, vol. 3 (pt. 2), pp. 2756–2799.

One was necessity of military cooperation between the three states and other was practical necessity of a unified command. This unified command happened to be French and for obvious reason just as command of forces in Korea was placed in American hands. I thereupon besought him very emphatically to withdraw his temporal and geographical limitations on use of the three battalions. As regards his intimation that it would be necessary to come to an agreement with the other two Associated States before Cambodian troops could be allowed to go to their territories, I said there could be no objection to making such arrangements with neighboring states in Indochina but he well knew that it would take six months at least and probably a year before any such arrangements could be made whereas the danger was immediate. He replied that a mere three battalions would make little difference in fate of war in Indochina. I said that in these months of near equilibrium of forces it might mean difference between victory and defeat. More important than practical effect were the principles of mutual cooperation and unified command.

He appeared to weaken and said that he might make such an arrangement but it would have to be secret. I said I would not attempt to suggest terms or form of agreement but must urge on him necessity of turning three battalions over without strings attached to them. I remarked that when I had talked with King and with him previously he had never raised question of these five battalions. Penn Nouth rejoined that French had suddenly come forward with a demand that they be allowed to maintain a garrison at Phnom Penh airport, which was completely out of line with whole course of discussions on surrender of French powers. I replied that I had not heard of this demand.

(*Note:* In talking with Dejean last night the latter said that demand for airport was purely Risterucci's idea. He said French colony was so terrorized as result of incidents in Phnom Penh and fairly recent ambiguous statements by Cambodian Government regarding protection of French in Phnom Penh that Risterucci felt it was necessary to have French forces visibly adjacent to capital. Dejean said there is no military necessity to occupy airport and French would not insist upon it in case of Cambodian objections).

I remarked I was well aware of popular enthusiasm particularly among youth generated by King's mobilization order. That enthusiasm was directed toward defense of Cambodia if attacked from without, noble but narrow aim. I hoped to see it develop into a crusading spirit of joining with its neighbors and France against common danger of Communist engulfment.

In conclusion, I said to Penn Nouth I thought it would be desirable for me to see King and Prime Minister agreed that he would put through request.

Comment: Senator Knowland's remarks and observations on necessity of mutual defense cooperation between Cambodia and other Associated States and French were impressively delivered and very useful. . . .

It may be necessary to warn King and his government that Cambodia's failure to cooperate militarily even to a minimum degree with High Command and its Indochina neighbors must be followed by cessation of American aid and its re-allocation to countries which are actually engaged in fighting Communists. I believe no such steps should be taken until I have talked again with Penn Nouth and with King. They have had a very definite warning from Senator Knowland that as far as Congress is concerned persistence in policy of noncooperation might involve withdrawal of American aid.[4]

HEATH

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[4] In telegram 446 to Saigon, Sept. 16, the Department expressed agreement with Ambassador Heath that no decision should be taken regarding the cessation of aid to Cambodia pending further study and further developments. (751R.00/9–1553) In a memorandum to Robertson and Bonsal dated Sept. 17, Ogburn of FE warned that the question of aid suspension should be examined very carefully, for the principle involved transcended relations with Cambodia and Southeast Asian affairs in general. (751H.5/7–1753)

Meanwhile, Ambassador Heath reported in telegram 449 from Saigon, Sept. 14, that military aid to Cambodia had actually been suspended since the previous May. General Trapnell, Chief of MAAG, Saigon, had taken the action on his own initiative. (751H.00/9–1453) In telegram 489 of Sept. 19, Heath relayed the following additional information from General Trapnell. Deliveries of MDAP equipment had been suspended in June (not May) due to large-scale desertions from Cambodian forces involving the loss of equipment. All items destined for Cambodia were being stored in Saigon. Cambodian authorities had not been informed of the suspension of military aid deliveries. (751H.00/9–1953)

751G.5 MSP/9–1054

Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Cutler)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] September 15, 1953.

Subject: Congressional Reaction to Indochina Program

Senator George[2] felt that the decision was a proper one.

Senator Russell[3] felt that the French had out-traded us and that they could probably carry more of the burden if forced to. In the end, he seemed fairly satisfied but it is recommended that Admiral Radford or General O'Daniel, or both, should arrange to have a talk with him the next time Senator Russell is in the City.

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[1] Drafted by Thruston B. Morton, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, and Ben H. Brown, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary.

[2] Walter F. George of Georgia, ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

[3] Richard B. Russell of Georgia, ranking minority member of the Senate Armed Services Committee; member of the Appropriations Committee.

Congressman Richards[4] agreed that the proposal should be adopted. He based his conclusion primarily on the JCS view. With respect to appropriations for this purpose for fiscal '55, he intimated that he would reserve judgment until he could study developments. He stated that he has always supported the transferability clause and thinks it perfectly appropriate for the President to use the power given him. He expressed appreciation at being consulted on something the President clearly had the authority to do without congressional action.

Congressman Vorys[5] discussed very thoroughly the question of additional aid for Indochina and the reasons underlying the Administration's thinking in this regard. Mr. Vorys expressed himself, after thorough discussion, as having no objection to the transfer of funds from Title I to Title III. He did, however. express strong misgivings on three points: (1) the end use of the additional U.S. aid, a part of which would go into troop pay, and the precedent that this would set; (2) the fact that this additional aid is justified in terms closely resembling the arguments used in justification of the request for the $400 million special aid for France and Indochina appropriated in the last session of Congress; (3) the fact that some of the additional U.S. aid would make up for a cutback in the French budgetary support for Indochina.

Mr. Vorys was told that the Administration also felt keenly these points, but that the alternative of not granting additional aid was so bad as to appear unacceptable to the U.S. In conclusion, Mr. Vorys continued to express his misgivings, but agreed that he would not express any strong objections to the move. He expressed appreciation of the Administration's consideration in consulting the congressional leaders.

For the Secretary:
THRUSTON B. MORTON
Assistant Secretary

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[4] James P. Richards of South Carolina, ranking minority member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

[5] John M. Vorys of Ohio, member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

751H.00/9-1753 : Telegram

The Chargé at Phnom Penh (Montllor) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PHNOM PENH, September 17, 1953—2 p. m.

35. Sent niact Saigon 61 repeated information Department 35, Paris 30. Prime Minister Penn Nouth yesterday released declaration dated

September 14 purporting to explain his message of September 10.[1] Cites three reasons for inviting Viet Minh to leave country. (1) Viet Minh never identified itself as Communist but rather as pro-independence, and therefore Royal Government wished to expose Communist's fraudulent claims; (2) Cambodia had to show "neutral countries" that she was not fighting Viet Minh as "slave of imperialists" but because Communists were invading Cambodian soil; (3) by setting deadline for Viet Minh departure from Cambodia, Royal Government would be justified in opening attacks on Viet Minh after that date (October 1).

Penn Nouth declaration then attacks France and US for "unwarranted" reaction to his message of September 10. Basing his argument on AP dispatch from Phnom Penh which stated American Embassy Phnom Penh had warned that military and economic aid might be cut off and similar report that France would abandon Cambodia, Prime Minister asks whether there is justice on earth and whether it is normal that small countries be condemned to die because they refuse to buy their lives at shameful price of abdication as free people.

Declaration reiterates refusal to fight Viet Minh outside of frontiers for four reasons: (1) Not yet having its own military command, Cambodia cannot declare war on Viet Minh; (2) Cambodia reciprocates Vietnam's wish not to have Vietnamese soldiers on Cambodian soil; (3) in absence assistance pacts with France and US, Cambodia cannot conceive of making war on Viet Minh since she is not sure of the help she will get; (4) Cambodian troops cannot operate in Vietnam in absence of agreement between two states.

Penn Nouth expresses concern over fact that Cambodia is not given right to consider Communists as anything but mortal enemy. Also accuses "allies" of forcing little countries to fight communism to death while these powers can sign armistices with Communists.

Embassy comment: Declaration was prepared before visit Senator Knowland to Phnom Penh and release was held up until Senator's position was made clear. Apparently Senator's firm stand on necessity for unselfish common effort against Communists had effect to irritate further Penn Nouth and King. Declaration being given widest publicity since yesterday. Internal effect sought is to rally remaining Issarak rebels to government but there is no indication that Sonngoc Thanh ready to abandon dissidence by October 1. If main rebels have not rallied by that date, Royal Government will be in difficult position of having called everybody Cambodia's enemy. New government may conceivably emerge from the present crisis. Foreign Minister confided that he has already asked King to be relieved of Cabinet post.

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[1] A summary translation of the statement of Sept. 14 was transmitted to Washington in telegram 465 from Saigon, Sept. 17, not printed. (751H.00/9–1753) For the full text, see *Livre Jaune*, II, p. 62. For a summary translation of the Prime Minister's statement of Sept. 10, see footnote 1, p. 798.

MONTLLOR

Editorial Note

On September 17, 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles made the following remarks on Indochina in the course of an address delivered during the general debate phase of the Eighth Session of the United Nations General Assembly at New York.

"Let me turn to Indochina. There the fighting continues. Communist forces are seeking to gain political power by military violence. Their military strength comes from a steady flow of military supplies from Communist China and Soviet Russia and from the Soviet-controlled Skoda munition works. The pretext, until now, has been that the Associated States of Indochina were mere colonies and that the Communist war was designed to promote 'independence' rather than to expand by violence the Soviet camp.

"It is no longer possible to support such a pretext. The French Government by its declaration of July 3, 1953, has announced its intention of completing the process of transferring to the Governments of the three Associated States all those remaining powers that are needed to perfect their independence to their own satisfaction.

"The Communist-dominated armies in Indochina have no shadow of a claim to be regarded as the champions of an independence movement. If Soviet-bloc countries outside of Indochina persist in promoting war in Indochina, they cannot now be surprised if their conduct is taken as proof that they adhere to the design to extend their rule by methods of violence.

"Southeast Asia affords the Soviet leaders a chance to give substance to their peaceful words. We anxiously await their verdict."

For the full text of the speech, see United Nations, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighth Session, Plenary Meetings*, pages 17–21, or Department of State *Bulletin*, September 28, 1953, pages 403–408.

751H.00/9–2453 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, September 24, 1953—7 p. m.

510. Repeated information Paris 153, Phnom Penh unnumbered.

Senator Mansfield[1] was received yesterday by Prime Minister Penn Nouth in Phnom Penh. Atmosphere of meeting was more relaxed than that reported Embtel 458, repeated Paris 131, Bangkok 15 [2] but Mansfield left no doubt in Prime Minister's mind that he likewise felt Cambodia should join cause with all free nations in common struggle against international communism.

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[1] Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited Indochina from Sept. 21 to 29. His findings are set forth in *Indochina: Report of Senator Mike Mansfield on a Study Mission to the Associated States of Indochina–Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos* (83d Cong., 1st sess., Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, Committee Print, Oct. 27, 1953).

Much of hour-long interview was weary rehash of which comes first, hen or egg, argument, Prime Minister reiterating that Cambodia could do nothing until it was independent and Senator reiterating that independence was meaningless if it was won only to be lost to Communist attack. . . .

Penn Nouth sought to establish contention that Cambodia could do more in common cause if it were given direct US military aid and alleged that he could raise 30,000 men ticolots [*to colors?*] almost overnight if such aid were forthcoming. Senator dodged this issue, but McClintock, who was also present, later told Prime Minister privately that Cambodia was engaged in an international war, that war on free side was being waged by coalition, and that in terms of military efficiency it was but normal that one channel of supply should be chosen. Furthermore, Vietnamese new battalions had no difficulty in receiving American equipment through French channel.

Mansfield departed today for Siem Reap and will proceed tomorrow to Vientiane, thence to Hanoi, returning Saigon September 27. I am accompanying him.

HEATH

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[2] Dated Sept. 15, p. 802.

Secretary's Letters, lot 56 D 459, "President"

The Secretary of State to the President

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] September 29, 1953.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

All of the understandings we sought with the French regarding Indochina have now been concluded and it is expected that the Exchange of Notes, or Agreements,[1] will be signed at 6 p. m. Paris time today. An agreed communiqué will be issued at 6 p. m. Paris time tomorrow (noon, Washington time).

I attach a copy of the communiqué.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

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[1] *Infra.*

[Annex]

TEXT OF JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ RELATING TO ADDITIONAL U.S. AID FOR INDOCHINA, TO BE RELEASED ON SEPT. 30 AT 12 NOON, WASHINGTON TIME, AND AT 6 P.M. PARIS TIME [2]

The forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina have for eight years been engaged in a bitter struggle to prevent the engulfment of Southeast Asia by the forces of international communism. The heroic efforts and sacrifices of these French Union Allies in assuring the liberty of the new and Independent States of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam have earned the admiration and support of the free world. In recognition of the French Union effort the United States Government has in the past furnished aid of various kinds to the Governments of France and the Associated States to assist in bringing the long struggle to an early and victorious conclusion.

The French Government is firmly resolved to carry out in full its declaration of July 3, 1953 by which it announced its intention of perfecting the independence of the three Associated States in Indochina, through negotiations with the Associated States.

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[2] This text was made public in Department of State Press Release No. 529, Sept. 30, 1953.

This communiqué was the result of negotiations between U.S. and French officials in Paris, with instructions from the Department of State playing an important role in matters of both form and substance. A major point of contention was the French desire that the communiqué allude to the possibility of a negotiated settlement in Indochina, or at least not rule out that possibility. An advance French draft, transmitted to Washington in telegram 1255, Sept. 26, included the following paragraph:

"On a purely military plane, aware that an increased effort is necessary to assure the success of existing plans for the destruction of the enemy's battle forces, it was decided to send, temporarily, reinforcements to its expeditionary corps and to intensify, in cooperation with the Associated States, the formation of strong national armies which will be able to impose upon the Communist enemy a regime of liberty and independence under restored peaceful conditions."

In the same telegram, Ambassador Dillon commented as follows: "We had informed Foreign Office of importance we attached to point that communiqué reflect intention carry out Navarre plan and avoid any hint negotiations possible. Above is best attempt satisfy these requirements which Foreign Office states they can get through government in present political climate regarding Indochina. They state impossible get Cabinet approval any text which excludes possibility negotiated peace." (751G.5 MSP/9–2653)

In telegram 1170 to Paris, Sept. 26, the Department objected vigorously to the French draft. The telegram read in part as follows: "General tone draft communiqué is disappointingly soft and vague. . . . We would hope that French Government would agree that any indication of weakness at this juncture can only undercut Laniel–Navarre plan and negate additional effort which France with further US assistance is about to make. Communiqué at sharp variance both with energetic and determined tenor of exchange of letters and with specific assurances contained therein. . . . This matter is most important here where we have had overcome truly great difficulties find necessary funds and in meeting Congressional views. You should intervene personally with Laniel." (751G.5 MSP/9–2653)

In telegram 1273 from Paris, Sept. 28, Ambassador Dillon reported that as the result of his intervention that afternoon with Foreign Minister Bidault, the Foreign Ministry had agreed to a slightly revised U.S. draft. That agreed text, transmitted in telegram 1273, is virtually identical with the communiqué as released on Sept. 30. (751G.5 MSP/9–2853)

The Governments of France and the United States have now agreed that, in support of plans of the French Government for the intensified prosecution of the war against the Viet Minh, the United States will make available to the French Government prior to December 31, 1954 additional financial resources not to exceed 385 million dollars. This aid is in addition to funds already earmarked by the United States for aid to France and the Associated States.

The French Government is determined to make every effort to break up and destroy the regular enemy forces in Indochina. Toward this end the Government intends to carry through, in close cooperation with the Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese Governments, the plans for increasing the Associated States forces while increasing temporarily French forces to levels considered necessary to assure the success of existing military plans. The additional United States aid is designed to help make it possible to achieve these objectives with maximum speed and effectiveness.

The increased French effort in Indochina will not entail any basic or permanent alteration of the French Government's plans and programs for its NATO forces.

Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 165

Texts of Letters Exchanged by the Ambassador in France (Dillon) and the French Foreign Minister (Bidault) at Paris, September 29, 1953

SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

US–FRENCH SUPPLEMENTARY AID AGREEMENT ON INDOCHINA[1]

The agreement consists of six letters exchanged between Bidault and Ambassador Dillon on September 29, 1953. The three letters attached cover the full text of the agreement:

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[1] This agreement was negotiated at Paris during the period Sept. 10–28 by personnel of the U.S. Embassy and MSA Mission (with detailed guidance from Washington), and officials of the French Government. Documentation on the negotiations is in file 751G.5 MSP. The official texts of the letters exchanged and translations of the French components of the exchange were transmitted to Washington with despatch 938 from Paris, Oct. 2, 1953. (751G.5 MSP/10–253) Despatch 938 also transmitted as an enclosure the official French text signed by Premier Laniel of the French memorandum on additional assistance for Indochina dated Sept. 1 and delivered in final form to Ambassador Dillon on Sept. 3; for an unofficial translation of that memorandum, see p. 7 0.

The document printed here comprises the English language texts of the exchange of letters as transmitted with despatch 938 from Paris, Oct. 2. The source text is filed with reference material prepared for U.S. participants in the tripartite Foreign Ministers Meeting at London, Oct. 16–18, 1953.

1. French letter setting forth the political and military undertakings of the French Government in Indochina ("Step 1")
2. US letter setting forth the amount, terms and conditions of supplementary aid ("Step 3")
3. US letter acknowledging a French letter which sets forth procedures to verify expenditures on the war in Indochina ("Step 6")

[Attachment 1]

English Translation French Letter "Step 1"

PARIS, 29 September 1953.

MY DEAR MR. AMBASSADOR: With reference to the exchange of views which has taken place during recent weeks between the Government of the United States and the Government of the French Republic concerning the additional aid necessary for the financing of the military operations in Indochina, I have the honor to confirm to your Excellency the information contained in the memorandum of September 3, 1953 of the French Government which indicated the plans, programs and policies of the French Government for the intensified prosecution of the war against the Vietminh by the forces of France, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

At the moment when the Government of the United States is considering the possibility of such additional aid, I consider it equally useful to state briefly the intentions of the French Government as follows:

1. France is firmly resolved to apply fully its declaration of July 3, 1953,[2] by which it announced its intention of perfecting the independence of the three Associated States of Indo-China.
2. In the view of the French Government, the purpose of the additional aid in question is to enable it to put into effect the strategic and tactical principles of a military action program in Indo-China, the terms and timing of which are set forth in Annex No. 4 of the memorandum of September 3. As outlined in the aforementioned document, the strategic plan of the French Command consists essentially of retaking the offensive with a view to breaking up and destroying the regular enemy forces. Convinced that the military problem in Indo-China can be settled only in conformity with such a plan, the French Government confirms that it intends to carry forward vigorously and promptly the execution thereof. In accordance with the basic strategic concepts of the Navarre Plan, the French Government has already commenced to build up the Associated States forces and is proceeding to despatch French reinforcements to General Navarre.
3. The French Government will continue to facilitate exchanges of information and views on a continuing basis between French and United States military authorities and will take into consideration the views expressed by the latter with respect to the development and

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[2] For translation, see telegram 52 from Paris, July 3, p. 634.

carrying out of the French strategic plans without in any way, of course, detracting from exclusive French responsibility for adoption and execution thereof.

4. The French Government is prepared to provide to the United States Government all appropriate information regarding the type and amount of expenditures necessitated by the military program.

5. The French Government considers that the increased effort which it intends to make in Indo-China under the conditions set forth in the memorandum of September 3 will not entail any basic or permanent alteration of its plans and programs concerning those of its forces which are placed under the command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I avail myself [etc.] [3] BIDAULT

[Attachment 2]

Step 3

PARIS, September 29, 1953.

EXCELLENCY: I have the honor to refer to Your Excellency's letter of September 29, 1953,[4] to my reply thereto of the same date,[5] and to the memorandum of the French Government of September 3, 1953. This memorandum, together with its annexes, outlines the plans, programs and policies of the French Government for the intensified prosecution of the war against the Viet Minh by the forces of France, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

I. In accordance with the request of the French Government, the United States Government has carefully considered these documents with a view to determining the contribution which it could make in support of the additional military effort, with a view to helping to bring the hostilities in Indo-China to a satisfactory conclusion within the foreseeable future. In consequence of this consideration and in light of the request of the French Government and of the understandings set forth in our exchange of letters under reference, as well as in the following paragraphs of this letter, the United States Government will make available, prior to December 31, 1954, additional financial resources not to exceed $385 million, or its equivalent in French francs, in support of the additional military effort of the French Union in Indo-China. This amount is additional to: (1) the $460 million in aid described in the memorandum handed to the French Government by representatives of the United States Government in Paris on April 26,

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[3] Ambassador Dillon acknowledged receipt of this letter in a letter to Bidault which constituted "step 2." Dillon's letter noted the intentions of the French Government as expressed in "step 1" and repeated the operative portion of its text. (Despatch 938 from Paris, Oct. 2, 1953; 751G.5 MSP/10–253)

[4] Reference is to "step 1."

[5] Reference is to "step 2."

1953;[6] (2) the economic aid program to the Associated States; (3) the item of $85 million appropriated by Congress for the United States fiscal year 1953/54 for artillery, ammunition and semi-automatic weapons for the French forces under the command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; (4) any dollar funds that may be made available to France from United States fiscal year 1953/54 appropriations for basic materials development, overseas territories development, and technical assistance; and (5) it is likewise additional to the end-item assistance to the French Government and the Associated States out of past or currently available United States appropriations, after the adjustments required by Congressional action and by the present augmentation of financial aid to France have been made. The end-item assistance to be made available for Indo-China operations and referred to above has been discussed and will be determined by the United States Government in the near future.

II. This commitment of the United States Government is made upon the understandings derived from the above-mentioned exchange of letters, dated September 29, 1953, and from the memorandum of September 3, 1953.

III. It is understood that the total amount of United States assistance described in paragraph I of this letter is the full extent of assistance which the United States Government will be able to make available to the French Government and to the Associated States for the calendar year 1954 from the United States fiscal year 1953/54 appropriations. It is further understood that there will be counted as a part of the additional United States assistance described in this letter ($385 million or its equivalent in French francs) releases of counterpart (except for the counterpart of any of the types of special assistance described in paragraph I (4) above) accruing during the calendar year 1954 in the Special Account of the Crédit National from dollar aid allotments to France from United States fiscal year 1952/53 and prior appropriations, to the extent that such releases increase the total of countervalue receipts in support of the French military budgets for the calendar years 1953 and 1954 above a franc amount equivalent, at the rate of exchange current at the time when the franc resources are actually realized, to the aid described below in this paragraph which has been or is to be made available in support of the French military budgets for the calendar years 1953 and 1954 from United States fiscal year 1952/53 and 1953/54 appropriations. The amount of this aid is $1,070 million, made up as follows:

(*a*) $485 million of assistance from United States fiscal year 1953/54 appropriations, composed of $400 million for Indo-China and $85 million for French forces under the command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization;

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[6] See footnote 2, p. 567.

(*b*) $217.5 million of budget-supporting offshore procurement already effected from United States fiscal year 1952/53 appropriations;

(*c*) $367.5 million of defense support aid from United States fiscal year 1952/53 appropriations. The franc resources to be realized from this latter amount of aid will, of course, be net of the 10 percent counterpart set aside for the use of the United States Government. This net amount is calculated at $330.75 million. Thus when counterpart withdrawals for military purposes from the Special Account of the Crédit National in the two calendar years 1953 and 1954 taken together exceed the franc equivalent of $330.75 million computed at the rate of exchange at which the counterpart is deposited, additional accruals during the calendar year 1954 will be counted as a part of the amount of 135 billion francs of additional assistance described in this letter.

IV. In its memorandum of September 3, the French Government has estimated that during the calendar year 1954 the plans outlined in the aforementioned memorandum for increasing the forces of the Associated States will cost a total of 195 billion francs, of which it is planned that the Governments of the Associated States will finance 60 billion francs (the equivalent of 6 billion piasters at the present rate of exchange). On these assumptions the sum of $385 million referred to above, or its equivalent in French francs, is considered by the United States Government to represent the full amount of 135 billion francs requested in the memorandum of September 3, which stated that the complete execution of the recommendations of General Navarre was subject to the grant of this additional aid. It is of course understood that in the review in detail of the cost of financing the various components of these plans, savings might be developed which would reduce the amount of additional aid required. Any savings developed would be applied first to reimburse the French Government for any expenditures it may have to make in order to meet any shortfall in the proposed contribution by the Associated States of the equivalent of 60 billion francs, and thereafter to reduce the ceiling figure of $385 million in additional aid described in this letter.

V. The United States Government concurs in the proposal made by the French representatives that the process of refining the estimate of costs, together with the development of procedures for determining the requirements for funds and for making the additional aid available, should be worked out in detail between representatives of the Governments concerned, and should be carried on continuously throughout the calendar year 1954. It is understood that the procedures to be worked out will be based upon the principle that the United States Government will provide the financing for agreed franc and/or piaster expenditures (outside the 60 billion francs referred to in paragraph IV above) relating to the National Armies of the Associated States, as such expenditures actually arise, up to the aforementioned maximum of $385 million computed at the rate or rates of exchange current at the time when the expenditures are made. Any changes in costs which may result from any adjustments in the rates of exchange will of course be taken into account in determining the amount of United States financing to be made available, provided, however, that the total amount of the additional United States assistance described in this letter will in no case exceed $385 million.

VI. Should, for any reason, the French Government's plan, as outlined in the memorandum of September 3 and Your Excellency's letter of September 29 referred to above, prove incapable of execution or should other unforeseen circumstances arise which negate the above assumptions or understandings, the United States Government would not consider itself, insofar as the additional aid referred to above is concerned, committed beyond the amounts it had theretofore made available to the French Government, and it would desire to consult urgently with the French Government as to the future course of action.

VII. The United States Government has reached its decision to increase its assistance for Indo-China in the conviction that the heroic efforts and sacrifices of France and the Associated States to prevent the engulfment of Southeast Asia by the forces of international Communism, and to permit thereby the emergence of the free and independent states of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, are in the interest of the entire free world. It is also confident of the ability of France, with the ever-increasing assistance of the Associated States, to bring this long struggle to an early and victorious conclusion.

I avail myself [etc.] [7] DOUGLAS DILLON

[Attachment 3]

Step 6

PARIS, September 29, 1953.

MY DEAR MR. AMBASSADOR: [8] I have the honor to refer to your letter of September 29, 1953, which reads as follows: [9]

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[7] Foreign Minister Bidault acknowledged receipt of this letter in a letter to Dillon which constituted "step 4." Bidault's letter noted the commitments undertaken by the Government of the United States, expressed agreement with the arrangements set forth, and repeated the operative portion of the text of "step 3." (Despatch 938 from Paris, Oct. 2, 1953; 751G.5 MSP/10-253)

[8] This letter was addressed to Ambassador Alexandre Parodi, Secretary General of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

[9] The letter from Parodi to Dillon, quoted here, constituted "step 5." (Despatch 938 from Paris, Oct. 2, 1953; 751G.5 MSP/10-253)

"I have the honor to refer to the letters which are being exchanged under today's date between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and yourself concerning the plans of the French Government with respect to its military effort in Indo-China and the contribution to be made by the United States Government in support thereof.

"During the conversations leading up to the afore-mentioned exchanges of letters, representatives of our two Governments undertook an exchange of views regarding the procedures for making the assistance available and for accounting for the utilization thereof, with particular reference to the requirement which must be met by the United States Government under its foreign aid legislation of establishing a clear and precise record concerning the uses to which the assistance has been put.

"In this respect, the French Government, after having examined carefully the problem raised by the United States Government during those conversations, is prepared:

> "1. To provide to the United States Government all appropriate information regarding the type and amount of expenditures financed by the assistance for Indo-China. It is understood that this information will relate not only to the costing of the program but also to the expenditures actually effected. Representatives of the two Governments will consult with respect to the degree of detail necessary to enable the United States Government to meet the requirements of its foreign aid legislation and agree upon the details to be furnished.
>
> "2. To designate qualified representatives, who would work together with the designated representatives of the United States Government in examining from time to time all relevant French documents for the purpose of confirming the reports rendered with respect to the utilization of the assistance made available by the United States Government.
>
> "3. To receive in Indo-China the designated representatives of the United States Government for the purpose of observing and reviewing from time to time the utilization of United States assistance. The French Government is also prepared to provide other information and facilities as heretofore provided under Article IX (3) of the Economic Cooperation Agreement between the United States and France, dated June 28, 1948, as amended.

"It is understood that the procedures to be worked out in accordance with the principles set forth in this letter will be applicable to the total amount of assistance to be made available by the United States Government for Indo-China during the calendar year 1954."

The United States Government has taken note of the position of the French Government as set forth in your letter quoted above. With particular regard to paragraph 2, thereof, the United States Government wishes to confirm to the French Government that any examination of French documents made pursuant to the terms thereof will be for the purpose of enabling the United States Government to satisfy the requirements of its foreign aid legislation. It goes without saying that there is no intention on the part of the United States Government to question the effectiveness of the French Government's procedures for the payment and auditing of public expenditures.

I avail myself [etc.] DOUGLAS DILLON

751G.5/10-153 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, October 1, 1953—7 p. m.

1325. Repeated information Saigon 123. September 30 AP report quoted Foreign Office spokesman as saying "France will never negotiate with Communists for a settlement of war in Indochina without participation US."

Above discussed with Royere, Roux's deputy, today who states AP report not an exact reproduction of what chief Foreign Office press section stated press yesterday. Latter intended convey thought that US would be consulted prior French engaging in any possible future discussions with Viet Minh looking toward conclusion of hostilities in Indochina.

In elaborating this point, Royere took position that this Foreign Office statement to press in no way intended modify present French determination do utmost implement Navarre Plan and increase strength Franco-Associated States position Indochina. However, since Foreign Office believes that eventually settlement of hostilities in Indochina through some agreement with Viet Minh and/or Chinese Communists will be necessitated as was case in Korea, it intends seek international consultation prior engaging any conversations with adversary. In addition consultation US and possibly Great Britain beforehand, Foreign Office envisages some form international participation in any eventual discussions along comparable but not necessarily similar lines as Korean political conference.

In response question, Royere stated (above) Foreign Office press comment not in reference to possible parallel conversations with Soviets and Chinese Communists which might take place at time Korean political conference since these would be of exploratory nature only and Foreign Office has no idea what if anything might come of such talks. However, intend consult US re such conversations if held as well.

Royere wished emphasize French not concurrently considering any possible conversations with Viet Minh re conclusion hostilities in Indochina.[1]

DILLON

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[1] In despatch 1046 from Paris, Oct. 15, 1953, the Embassy provided a detailed analysis of French policy objectives in Indochina, including extensive discussion of the French position regarding the possibility of settlement by means of negotiations. (751G.00/10-1553)

751J.13/10-353 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, October 3, 1953—2 p. m.

566. Repeated information Paris 167, Vientiane unnumbered. Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos, lunched with me today prior to his departure tomorrow for Paris where he is due arrive 4 p. m. local October 4. He will head Lao delegation in talks with French and expects to return to Laos within three weeks. Prime Minister made following points:

1. He is disappointed that more extensive aid has not thus far been forthcoming from STEM or other sources to implement program of military public works to which he and French command ascribe highest priority: namely, extension and improvement of runways at Vientiane Airport, improvement of airport at Seno, and road construction on vital highway from Vietnam to Vientiane. Nevertheless Souvanna Phouma is hopeful of presiding at official opening this road next November. He makes point that dry season Laos is only two or three months and that occasion will be lost this year to do much useful construction unless monetary support is forthcoming.

2. Re military situation, Prime Minister said he personally had accompanied patrols 100 kilometers northeast of Luang Prabang and was sure that Viet Minh had withdrawn from proximity of royal capital, although they still held Sam Neua. He thought brunt of forthcoming Viet Minh offensive would be against Tonkin Delta, but did not exclude possibility that if French Union forces succeeded in repelling this attack, Viet Minh would fall back against Laos in a face-saving operation for propaganda effect, claiming easy victories in the occupation of empty territory.

3. Prince said that officer training school of Laos had graduated 520 officers and NCO's of which approximately 130 would be commissioned officers. Program for calling of four battalions to colors had been completed and these battalions were stationed respectively at Vientiane, Savannakhet, Pakse, and Luang Prabang. As of yesterday three more battalions had been mustered and would, he thought, when training was complete, be posted at Luang Prabang, Vientiane and Pakse. There was no shortage of arms or ammunition and by turn of year he hoped that Laos would have between 30,000 and 50,000 men in field. This, however, imposed severe strain on administrative services since he had mustered most of government employees and, following call up of next three battalions, there would be shortage of available manpower for construction projects.

4. Prime Minister confirmed previous reports that General Gardet present French commander in Laos, was being recalled at request of

Lao Government because of his "maladresse" in ignoring Laos sensibilities. He did not, however, know what officer would replace general permanently, although temporary command of French Union and Lao forces has been entrusted to Colonel Crevecoeur.

HEATH

751G.00/10-353 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, October 3, 1953—3 p. m.

572. Repeated information Paris 169, Hanoi unnumbered. We had a long talk with Tam last night at a dinner given by De Jean in honor of Prince Buu Loc. Tam showed his habitual optimism and professed confidence that, despite rough weather ahead when National Congress meets, he would be able to realize goal expressed to Reuters' correspondent (Embtel 565 repeated Paris 166)[1] of convening a National Assembly by end of this year. Apparently his idea is to have Provincial and Municipal Councils which were elected last January, plus new councils to be chosen this month in restored areas, in turn vote for representatives to the new Parliament which would presumably be a prototype of a constituent assembly. However, we recall Dac Khe's comment (Paris telegram 1304 repeated information Saigon 119)[2] that Bao Dai feels there should be no Parliament until end of hostilities and it is possible that Tam's estimate of situation may be too optimistic.

Tam said that once National Assembly met, he would give summary of his stewardship as Prime Minister and in bringing about this evolution toward parliamentary government and then tell assembled representatives that the rest was up to them. However, until that time he seemed to be confident of his ability to remain in power. He felt Bao Dai had made a serious mistake in encumbering himself with present National Congress, but said that as a loyal servant of His Majesty he will do his utmost to keep it on the rails. Tam indicated he had every intention of going to Paris with Vietnamese delegation, spoke of his contemplated return here after the talks had ended, and of his intention then to visit US in response to President Eisenhower's invitation.[3]

HEATH

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[1] Telegram 565 from Saigon, Oct. 3, concerning Tam's plans for convening a national assembly, is not printed. (751G.00/10-253)

[2] Telegram 1304 from Paris, Sept. 30, reporting on information received from Nguyen Dac Khe, Deputy to Buu Loc (representative of Bao Dai in Paris), regarding Vietnamese political questions, is not printed. (751G.00/9-3053)

[3] The invitation under reference was extended in June. The visit had been postponed indefinitely in September at the request of Premier Tam.

751G.5 MSP/10–553 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, October 5, 1953—1 p. m.

1351. Embassy believes it unwise approach French here at this time subject Deptel 1224, October 1.[1] Portion of IC aid agreement to which Department refers was one about which French were particularly sensitive. In present atmosphere Paris dust of agreement announcement has not yet settled, press continues to speculate about "secret" conditions and concealed intentions, leftists spout about selling blood for dollars and even moderates and friends US deplore fact that agreement undoubtedly lessens possibilities negotiated peace. Moment, therefore, not suitable to bring up question US military mission to IC or anything else which could be interpreted substantiate allegations US now directing IC war with French bodies.

For this reason it is recommended that any action in matter vis-à-vis French authorities Paris be deferred for at least fortnight. By that time if all goes well, news of agreement will have been digested and atmosphere should be clearer. Recommendation not to be interpreted as constituting opposition to O'Daniel mission per se. We think it excellent idea as proposed, particularly under a man as favorably known French circles. Our objectives are merely question of timing.

Since drafting above Deptel 1262, October 2[2] has been received. Agree this is best way handle matter. Suggest O'Daniel emphasize that request comes in answer Navarre's prior invitation return IC and not precipitated by new agreement. When arrangements sufficiently advanced recommend Embassy be authorized inform Foreign Office and Secretariat relations Associated States.[3]

DILLON

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[1] Telegram 1224 to Paris, Oct. 1, not printed, indicated that the Departments of State and Defense favored another mission to Indochina by General O'Daniel in the near future, pursuant to the exchange of letters of Sept. 29 on additional aid (p. 812) which included the provision that the French Government would continue to facilitate the exchange of military information. (751G.5 MSP/10–153)

[2] Telegram 1262 to Paris, Oct. 2, not printed, stated that arrangements for the mission would be made by direct correspondence between Generals O'Daniel and Navarre. (751G.5 MSP/10–253)

[3] In telegram 1348 to Paris, Oct. 9, Ambassador Dillon was informed that the visit would be considered a progress reporting exercise in continuation of the original O'Daniel mission of July. (751G.5 MSP/10–553) The second O'Daniel mission visited Indochina in November.

Editorial Note

On October 7, 1953, the Department of State received a note from the Embassy of Vietnam expressing appreciation for the United

States decision to provide an additional $385 million for the war effort against the Viet Minh and stating the determination of Vietnam to intensify its prosecution of the war. The note was made public in Department of State Press Release No. 546, October 7, 1953; for text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, October 26, 1953, page 552.

751G.00/10-953

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] October 9, 1953.

Participants: Ambassador Bonnet
Mr. MacArthur

Ambassador Bonnet called on me this afternoon at his request. He said he had been instructed by his government to raise the following problem with the Department:

French intelligence has had a number of disquieting reports indicating that the Chinese Communists may support the Vietminh forces in Indochina with jet planes. Ambassador Bonnet made reference to the following three specific reports:

1. From an "absolutely sure" source, it was certain that the Chinese were training Vietminh pilots for both conventional and jet aircraft at the Chinese Communist training center at Nanning in Kwangsi province (which is the province adjacent to the northern Indochinese frontier).
2. A "good" source has reported that Chinese-trained Vietminh jet pilots have recently returned from China to Tongking, a province in northern Indochina. One assumption is that a Vietminh airfield which can take jets might be constructed in Tongking and particular reference was made to a road near Langson, which is capable of being improved into a jet airstrip. However, the sources of this report believed Vietminh jets would probably be based in China with any field that might be constructed in Tongking for emergency use.
3. A report of doubtful reliability from Taipei indicates that recently a substantial number of Soviet manufactured MIGs have been flown to southern China where they are now based near the Indochinese frontier.

French High Commissioner Dejean and General Navarre have made the point to Paris that if a Vietminh offensive is in prospect and if Vietminh are able to employ jet aircraft, the French must be in a position to meet enemy jets with jet aircraft. At the present time the French have no jet aircraft in Indochina and rely entirely on conventional propeller driven aircraft.

Ambassador Bonnet then made reference to the "Honolulu Conference"[1] where military officials of the five powers (U.S., U.K., France, Australia and New Zealand) had made a study of what should be done if the Chinese stepped up substantially their assistance to Indochina and also if they intervened directly. Ambassador Bonnet said that the "Honolulu agreement" was not too precise and that the French Government would like to have further discussions with us as to what should be done in the event that China threw jet aircraft into the Indochina fighting on the side of the Vietminh. This could be done either directly by China or through employing Vietminh pilots flying from Chinese bases or even using strips in Vietminh-held territory in Indochina.

Ambassador Bonnet said that he would hope to discuss this question with Secretary Dulles next week and in the meantime would be grateful if I would pass along the substance of his conversation with me to the Secretary.

I said to Ambassador Bonnet that I would be glad to pass along to the Secretary what he had told me but that I was not in a position to comment on his request. I reminded him that in his American Legion speech in St. Louis the Secretary had made certain pointed references to the situation in Indochina designed to make the Chinese Communist think very carefully before they intervened in Indochina.

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR II

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[1] Reference is to the military staff conference held in Hawaii from Sept. 21 to Oct. 2, 1953. For documentation on the frequent meetings of U.S. and allied military representatives concerning the defense of East and Southeast Asia, see volume XII.

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Paris Correspondence"

Memorandum of Conversation, by the First Secretary of the Embassy in France (Gibson)

SECRET [PARIS,] October 12, 1953.

Participants: Marc Jacquet, Secretary of State for Relations with Associated States
Senator Mike Mansfield[1]
Mr. Gibson

Senator Mansfield accompanied by Mr. Gibson called on M. Jacquet this morning. The Senator outlined his general impressions on Indochina as he had on Saturday to M. Reynaud.[2] On the whole he returned from Indochina more encouraged than discouraged largely because he felt the calibre of leadership in both military and civilian quarters in Indochina was now very high. Morale, too, had improved. On the other hand, he was very disturbed about the Vietnam military potential and the possibility of Franco-Vietnamese military reverses in the coming dry season.

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[1] Following the completion of his study mission in Indochina, Senator Mansfield stopped at Paris before returning to the United States.

[2] Gibson's memorandum of the conversation between Senator Mansfield and Vice-Premier Paul Reynaud which occurred on Saturday, Oct. 10, is not printed. (PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Paris Correspondence")

The following main points were covered subsequently:

(*1*) *Cambodia.* After Jacquet [*Mansfield*] had recounted his unsatisfactory interview with Penh Nouth and his general pessimism regarding the outlook for Cambodia, he informed Jacquet that it is his opinion General Navarre would be justified in taking whatever military steps were necessary to assure the security of his forces in Cambodia and the success of any military operations involving Cambodian territory. The Senator elaborated later on this point with Mr. Gibson and remarked that a "get tough" policy by France with regard to Cambodia would now be entirely justified.

(*2*) *Bao Dai.* The Senator told Jacquet how he regretted Bao Dai's failure to take a more active role in his country's affairs, particularly in military aspects. Jacquet enlarged upon the subject of Bao Dai at some length. He had spent all day Saturday with him in Paris and emerged vastly encouraged. For one thing, Bao Dai was now aware of the fact that he could no longer get away with his failings on the basis that he was, after all, a French puppet and therefore could not take responsibility for anything that went wrong. The responsibility was now squarely on Bao Dai's shoulders and he was aware of that fact. Jacquet reminded the Senator that Bao Dai was "the most intelligent Vietnamese" and that he must not judge his qualities on occidental standards. The qualities which we deplore in him were often those which are expected of an oriental potentate by the orientals. The wine-women-song aspects of his life are part of the picture expected of an oriental potentate by his people. Jacquet was certain that Bao Dai was now taking on a new mission in life. He had not observed events in Egypt for nothing and knew that his own position was now entering into a crucial period. He asked Jacquet point blank on Saturday whether in his opinion he should go back to Indochina immediately. Jacquet advised him not to, thinking it more important that he stay in Paris for the forthcoming negotiations and not disturb the workings of the present Vietnam congress. Bao Dai is interested. If he were not, he would chuck it all and go to Switzerland or the United States to "wallow in his millions."

(*3*) *Entry of Viet Minh Aviation into Indochina War.* Jacquet told the Senator that he wished to make France's position on the possibility of the intervention of Viet Minh or Chinese aircraft into the war. He stated that if any enemy aircraft were to enter into the war, the whole position of the loyalist forces would be jeopardized. Even if in the event the aircraft were entirely Viet Minh operated the French would regard such a development as a purely Chinese aggression and would take immediate steps in United Nations to make this position clear. Jacquet was asked whether he regarded this as an imminent possibility and said that, although there was no specific evidence of it at this time, the French were aware of the everpresent possibility and airfields were still being constructed and enlarged in the southern provinces of China.

(4) *Five-Power Conference.* Jacquet also wishes to make the following point clear: As the Senator was aware there had been a discussion in the Council of Ministers last week regarding the possibility of a five-power international conference including Communist China. He stated that although the Cabinet had voted down adopting such a proposal as official government policy there was a large and growing sentiment within the government and in French political circles generally, for the adoption of such a policy. He realized that this would present serious difficulties for the US but felt it was a reality which we could not afford to ignore any longer. If the government were to pursue any such policy they would do so on the "international plane" and only after due consultation with the US.

751G.00/10–1653 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

NIACT SAIGON, October 16, 1953.

668. Repeated information Paris 197, Hanoi 100. Vietnamese National Congress this afternoon suddenly and unexpectedly passed following resolution [1] by unanimous vote:

"The National Congress, considering that:

"In this historic circumstance, all free and independent countries have the tendency to cooperate closely with each other, in order to maintain their independence and liberty mutually and to promote world peace;

"Considering that alliance between peoples can be durable and useful only if the two countries can cooperate on an entirely free and equal basis and respect rights of each other;

"Considering that French Union, built on French Constitution of 1946, was quite contrary to sovereignty of an independent nation;

"Considering the first right of a people is its own interest;

"Decides:

"1. Not to join French Union;

"2. After having recovered all rights still held by France and after clarification of matters concerning old institute of emission, which is bank of Indochina, Vietnam will sign with France treaties of alliance on an equal basis, according to demands of France and Vietnam during any given period and under circumstances which will be clearly determined;

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[1] The National Congress, which met from Oct. 15 to Oct. 17, adopted four resolutions: 1) a statement on the independence of Vietnam, 2) a statement on the association of Vietnam with France, 3) a request to Bao Dai to choose delegates for future negotiations with France, 4) an expression of confidence in Bao Dai. This telegram contains an informal translation of resolution 2. For texts of the four resolutions, see *L'Année Politique, 1953*, pp. 581–582. For English language translation, see Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, vol. I, pp. 207–209.

"3. All negotiations, all recommendations, all decisions of any international assemblies regarding Vietnam must be decided by Vietnamese people;

"4. All treaties above-mentioned must be ratified by General Assembly of Vietnam, constituted by universal suffrage, in order for them to go into force."

HEATH

751G.00/10-1653 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, October 16, 1953—6:48 p. m.

655. Your 669 [*668*]. We are awaiting your comments regarding resolution of Vietnam National Congress expressing decision not to join French Union. Meanwhile following are our preliminary thoughts: Department most concerned at possible effect this resolution upon will and ability of French Government to proceed with implementation political and military plans we are supporting.[2]

It would be Department's hope that resolution of National Congress would be placed in proper focus by appropriate statements by Vietnamese Government representatives including Bao Dai and Tam.

Department also believes that in view particularly current offensive in North, it is most important for National Congress to pass strong resolution of solidarity with Vietnamese and French troops laying down their lives to defend independence details of which are to be worked out in forthcoming negotiations.

Department would also hope that official French comment would be restrained and while not denying right of Vietnamese to adhere or not to French Union would express hope that final details of relations between two countries would be left to be determined at forthcoming negotiations results of which would of course be subject to ratification in accordance legal procedures both countries.

SMITH

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Repeated for information to Paris, London, and Hanoi.

[2] In telegram 1507 from Paris, Oct. 16, Ambassador Dillon reported the following: "Announcement entirely unexpected resolution Vietnam national congress bombshell to Far Eastern Branch Foreign Office and Secretariat Associated States. Officials closely concerned Indochinese affairs both Ministries report initial reaction profound shock." (751G.00/10-1653)

396.1 LO/10–1753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State [1]

SECRET LONDON, October 17, 1953—1 a. m.

Secto 12. Repeated information Paris 252, Saigon 3. At Eden's dinner this evening Bidault in highly emotional state told Secretary that he had just learned that Vietnamese Congress had passed resolution against membership in French Union. While we did not get full and clear picture from Bidault, we gathered Congress had specified that relationship with France would be established by negotiated treaties outside French Union framework. Bidault was emphatic in opinion this Vietnam action would add so much grist to mill of Reynaud, Mendes-France et al that pressure to withdraw from Indochina would become irresistible unless solution rectified in next few days.

In response to query, Bidault said he understood Bao Dai was behaving well about this but he was in France many thousand kilometers away whereas here were maneuvers in Indochina involving Tam.

Bidault mentioned telephone conversation with Paris this afternoon and said Auriol was reported in high state of emotion about this.

DULLES

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[1] Secretary Dulles was in London for talks with British Foreign Secretary Eden and French Foreign Minister Bidault, Oct. 16–18. For information on this conference, which was devoted in large measure to questions concerning Germany and Austria, see editorial note in volume v.

651.51G/10–1753 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL NIACT SAIGON, October 17, 1953—3 p. m.

672. Repeated information Paris 200, Hanoi 103.[1] Hasty and ill-considered action of Vietnamese National Congress in voting resolution reported Embtel 668, repeated information Paris 197, Hanoi 100,[2] has now resulted in sober second thought and reflection on part of responsible Vietnamese leaders both in Congress and out. Prince Buu Loc, who was delegated by Bao Dai to organize Congress and keep it on track, was horrified at yesterday's resolution, has postponed his return to Paris, and is closeted with various personalities seeking ways and means to repair damage done. Tam told me this morning that he had been under interdiction from Bao Dai to concern himself with Congress and did not conceal his contempt for Tri and other northern and Dai Viet leaders, the Cao Daist Pope and others, who failed to exercise effective control over their delegations. Tam told me in con-

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[1] Also repeated to London as Tosec 18, Oct. 17.

[2] Dated Oct. 16, p. 826.

fidence that yesterday after passage of resolution he had telegraphed Bao Dai recommending that Chief of State make declaration to French press expressing disbelief in text of resolution as passed and conjecture that text resulted from incorrect translation from the Vietnamese language. Bao Dai had replied this morning instruction Buu Loc not to permit Congress to close until yesterday's gaffe had been repaired.

Last night Embassy officers and I attended reception offered jointly by Buu Loc and Tam for Congressional members. It was apparent that majority of delegates had honestly no idea of import of language in resolution they had just passed. Only more politically literate members had by that time begun to see through after-image of patriotic glow which had temporarily blinded them and expressed regret at excessive blunt language used.

On analysis of yesterday's events, it seems probable that Congress was cleverly sabotaged by pro-Viet Minh stooges in its midst. Tam said this morning that principal among these was representative of the Binh Xuyen, former Viet Minh adherent named Quynh, who drafted resolution and who at last minute struck from original text committee's language which provided that Vietnam would not adhere to French Union "in its present form". Tam likewise indicated that Viet Minh had infiltrated Cao Dai delegation and added that Cao Daist Pope, although fond of strutting on the podium, in reality had no political judgment or control over his delegation.

Last night more responsible elements in Congress sought belatedly to undo damage done. After voting by large majority to reconsider afternoon's proceedings, Congress adopted by 141 votes out of 169 to restore motion to original form as drafted in committees; in other words, that Congress go on record as opposing adherence to French Union "in its present form".

This amendment is locally regarded as master stroke of conciliation, but whether it will be so considered by French Parliament is open to question, since other operative paragraphs of resolution still stand and third paragraph of preamble with its stigma on French Constitution had not been modified.

I found DeJean this morning naturally most concerned at this sudden turn of events. Luckily his concern is matched by that of Prince Buu Loc, Tam and more responsible Dai Viet leaders, such as Dang Van Sung. I suggested to DeJean that possibly some of sting would be removed from yesterday's resolution were Congress to pass another resolution expressing debt of gratitude of Vietnam to France for its past and present gallant sacrifices in defense of Vietnamese independence. This notion was likewise pleasing to both Tam and Buu Loc and Defense Minister Quat but latter two are doubtful it would be voted by Congress in its present temper. Quat will undoubtedly try to do something and Buu Loc also but it is doubtful that Buu Loc has much personal influence. Probably all that will happen is that in closing speech Kim,[3] who presides, may say few words of gratitude for French effort and American contribution.

Latest word from Congress now in session is that Congress unable obtain names of 20 delegates willing take responsibility of serving on panel from which Bao Dai might select Vietnamese negotiating team and that Congress has passed resolution by big majority calling on Chief of State to select delegation from among its own two [garble] members, or elsewhere. Bao Dai also given alternative of coming back with clear orders to Congress to choose specific number delegates representing specific groups and with well-defined powers. Congress will hold closing session this afternoon. Since Buu Loc and Tam have been invited to address it, it is possible they will have opportunity to carry out instructions to prevent adjournment, but this now seems in doubt.

It is matter of extraordinary difficulty to convey degree of naiveté and childlike belief that no matter what defamatory language they use, the Vietnamese will still be safeguarded from lethal Communist enemy by France and US.

Objectives of our diplomacy at this critical juncture should, in our belief, be directed in Vietnam to bringing these people to sober realization of where they stand, dancing on brink of destruction; and in France to enlist those capacities of clear-sightedness and of true French greatness as world power to overlook this present irritant and to keep the national sights on the main stakes at issue.

HEATH

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[3] Tran Trong Kim, President of the National Congress; Premier of Vietnam in 1945 under the Japanese occupation.

396.1 LO/10–1753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

SECRET LONDON, October 17, 1953—4 p. m.

Secto 23. Repeated information Paris unnumbered, Saigon unnumbered. Subject: Indochina discussion at tripartite meeting October 17 morning.

Re military picture Bidault reported Viet Minh preparing major effort in Tonkin delta with two divisions, two regiments and one "special division" grouped north of Hanoi and two divisions and one regiment assembled in south of delta. Does not expect new Viet Minh push into Laos, but this cannot be ruled out in view presence one division near Vinh.

Re "Navarre Plan" nine battalions from France will be in Indochina by end October. Aircraft carrier *Arromanches* has arrived, the additional Air Force personnel will be on hand by end of month and the additional US equipment is also arriving in quantity. Of the 54 commando battalions program 36 now activated with 18 to follow within next month thus completing ahead of schedule. Bidault reported Navarre also succeeded in creating a mobile battle corps by withdrawing elements from static defense but did not give figures.

Re political aspects Bidault said talks have started in Indochina following French July 3 announcement. These, however, relate to transfer of certain limited powers and essential negotiations will be conducted soon in Paris.

Re Laos matters progressing smoothly with Laotians first to recognize need for continued presence western technicians. Talks Paris started October 15.

Re Cambodia difficulties common knowledge. Quick agreement was reached concerning transfer of police and judicial powers, but military has been stumbling block. French have now agreed transfer territorial command west of Mekong to Cambodia, also command of five battalions on condition that three be returned to French command for operations. However, difficulties continue unresolved concerning date of return and use of these three battalions as well as re protection of French and other foreigners.

Re Vietnam talks have not yet started; no fault of French who appointed their delegation in August. Delay caused Bao Dai who wanted non-governmental representatives in his delegation also because difficulties with Tam, internal Vietnam politics and calling off [*of?*] National Congress. Latter not only disappointment but has caused unexpected great difficulties. Congress adjourned without designating panel of 20 from which 6 representatives to Paris talks were to be selected. Resolution denouncing French Union (Secto 12 repeated Paris 252 Saigon 3) [1] could have disastrous effect both on Paris talks and French public opinion. Bao Dai has sent telegram calling for remedial action, but Bidault not optimistic in view demagogic climate Saigon. Bidault warned that because public opinion and parliamentary pressure French Government could not continue present effort if nothing subsists of French Union, for example, in military field so important to all interested in Southeast Asia. Bidault remarked parenthetically that Bao Dai also much better than his reputation (Eden later mentioned that he had recently received rather glowing report on Bao Dai from MacDonald).

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[1] Dated Oct. 17, p. 828.

Bidault then raised question action in support of French should Viet Minh Air Force appear. According "entirely reliable sources" pilot training school established Nanning last April. Other sources report concentration jet equipment South China and completion air strip Langson. French have no jet planes Indochina as not best adapted for present operations, but French Air Force would become worthless day Viet Minh jets appear. While five powers staff agency at meeting June 1953 considered question military help in case Communist Chinese aggression Bidault wanted inquire at what point increasing Chinese aid would bring above support agreement into play.

Eden stated French report re Viet Minh planes communicated to British JCS and any information thereon will be given to French. While pointing out difficulties drawing up theoretical schedule of "percentages of intervention," he recognized usefulness studying this important problem. UK fully understands link between Indochina and Malaya and improvement over past year would be wiped out if Navarre fails.

Secretary expressed great US appreciation French efforts Indochina which US sought to demonstrate in form very substantial financial and material aid.

Re possibility appearance Viet Minh planes US is studying this problem. Information given to US military who are checking their sources. The US is ready to consider what should be done if Communist China exceeds what could be considered a normal level of supplying military equipment.[2]

DULLES

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[2] Secretary Dulles briefed the National Security Council on the London Foreign Ministers conference at the 167th Meeting of the NSC, Oct. 22. The memorandum of discussion at that meeting indicates that Dulles stated the following with regard to the discussions at London concerning Indochina:

"Bidault had reported on the military and political situation in Indochina. In the course of the Saturday [Oct. 17] meeting had come the news of the resolution adopted by the National Congress of the Vietnamese, denouncing the French Union. Initially, Bidault had been completely dismayed by the report. The situation, however, by Sunday morning seemed to him less serious, since by then the tone of the resolution had been much modified. Nevertheless, the upshot of all this had not been very hopeful. Premier Laniel had failed to forestall debate in the French Parliament on the Indochina war. It was quite possible, said Secretary Dulles, that this debate could end in the overthrow of the Laniel government and the consequent ruin of our ambitious plan to bring the war in Indochina to a successful conclusion.

"With specific regard to the military situation in Indochina, Bidault had expressed to Secretary Dulles and Mr. Eden his great anxiety about the reports that jet planes would soon be made available to the Vietminh from Communist China. Secretary Dulles said that United States intelligence does not support French apprehensions in this regard. Our intelligence reported no airfields in Indochina capable of handling jet planes. If these planes were flown into Indochina from Chinese airfields, it would constitute direct and overt Chinese Communist intervention in the hostilities." (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file)

751G.00/10–1753 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, October 17, 1953—6 p. m.

1517. Repeated information Saigon priority 138, London priority 299. Re Embtel 1507.[1] Embassy officer saw Jacquet, Secretary of State for Relations Associated States, this morning.

News of first resolution received Paris yesterday early afternoon had, as reported, been bombshell. Jacquet was summoned to Elysee by Auriol followed by telephone calls back and forth to French delegation in London, interviews with Nguyen De (acting for Bao Dai) and certain deputies who lost no time bringing matter of "failure of government's policy in Indochina" to attention Assembly.

First action was despatch of telegram by Nguyen De, to Buu Loc in Saigon. Telegram, copy of which we were shown, was addressed to Buu Loc and Tam in Bao Dai's name and phrased in firmest terms. Resolution criticized as unwise, ill timed and contrary to Vietnam's interests which demand membership French Union. Buu Loc and Tam instructed take immediate steps amend resolution and inform delegates that Congress had "no constitutional or administrative powers". Jacquet says telegram was sent without any urging or for that matter consultation. Bao Dai said to have been "furious" and prepared depart immediately for Saigon to take corrective steps including, if necessary, dissolving Congress.

De Jean's telegram reporting resolution, copy of which we were also shown, not received until last night. Speaks of his intercession with Buu Loc and Tam during period between day and evening sessions. They were reminded of disastrous effect resolution would have on French public opinion and expeditionary force when major offensive in progress,[2] etc. De Jean speaks of able support given his *démarche* by Heath.

News of amendment to resolution adding phrase "in the present form defined by the constitution of 1946" received Paris late last night is considered be result both Bao Dai and De Jean *démarches* and to have cleared atmosphere considerably. As Jacquet confirmed, government has never questioned need review form of French Union as defined 1946 constitution and considers it integral part questions to be dealt with in forthcoming negotiations and, inevitably, in both Assembly and Senate Indochina debates.

As result amendment atmosphere considerably relaxed here today. Neither Jacquet nor Foreign Office intend make any public statements. Press gives wide coverage news reporting that interpolations of Lavet

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[1] See footnote 2, p. 827.

[2] On Oct. 14, French Union forces opened a major offensive on the southern portion of the delta perimeter, "Operation Mouette."

(UDSR) and Kuehn (ARS) have already been filed with Assembly and pressure growing for immediate Indochina debate. On this score Jacquet reports that Senate Indochina debate now scheduled for November 12 and that he hopes Assembly debate can be held off on grounds his coming absence from Paris and amendment to resolution.

Both Jacquet and Foreign Office highly critical of Buu Loc's instability and duplicity. They think Bao Dai should return Saigon promptly and that he probably will. Their explanation original resolution that Congress under strong influence delegates recently defected from Viet Minh to take sweeping step. Furthermore, many "extremist" nationalists not delegates and Congress wished, with oriental reasoning, prove that their absence would not prevent action they would have advocated if present. Moreover simply case Congress feeling oats.

Jacquet particularly bitter on "unanimity" first resolution. Were Buu Loc and Tam not delegates and, theoretically, acting under Bao Dai's instruction. Why did not former, at least, speak up. On other hand, consoled by large vote in favor amendment. Now inclined regard whole episode as another evidence strange oriental ways. If manner in which oriental position on given subject can change radically within hours as practical considerations alter conditions appears strange to us so must manner in which we invariably swallow bait hook and line appear unreal to orientals. We must try hold things in proper perspective.

As to next steps Jacquet thinks it best French officials say as little as possible. More than enough will be said in Assembly, Senate and in course negotiations. He does think it would be helpful if Secretary or other high American official could find suitable occasion in near future to refer to fact that while every means is now open for discussing eventual form French Union and relationships within it important immediate consideration is to get on with war.

DILLON

651.51G/10–1853 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, October 18, 1953—1 p. m.

681. Repeated information Paris 204, Hanoi unnumbered. As indicated in mytel's 672[1] and 676,[2] October 17 without awaiting Depart-

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[1] Dated Oct. 17, p. 828.

[2] Telegram 676 from Saigon, Oct. 17, read in part as follows: "National Congress held closing session afternoon Oct. 17. Buu Loc, Tam, and Kim, President of Congress, did much to pick up pieces left by Oct. 16 motion against adherence French Union in present form, but formal resolution expressing Congress' gratitude for French sacrifice in defense Vietnamese independence, which I had urged on leaders, was not forthcoming." (651.51G/10–1753)

ment's instructions I had suggested Vietnamese National Congress vote resolution of gratitude for French efforts and American help, US being included in order make resolution more palatable to anti-French elements Congress. I had at first hoped that Congress would amend original resolution re negotiations to include grateful reference to France. At reception for Congress October 16, I talked in this sense with Buu Loc, Tran Van An, Secretary General Congress, several Nationalist members, and Quat. All at that time were hopeful that at evening session resolution would be amended to a form acceptable to French opinion and susceptibilities. Actually, only change made was amendment statement refusing to enter French Union to one declining participate French Union "in its present form".

When I received official new draft resolution morning 17th, I immediately went to De Jean to discuss idea of congressional resolution expressing gratitude to France. I thereupon saw Buu Loc and Prime Minister Tam, again urging necessity of some such expression by Congress.

De Jean sent French priest to Bishop Le Huu Tu's [3] representative, urging similar action. When I saw Buu Loc again at noon, latter practically admitted he had failed. He urged me, however, to see Quat. Fact is that Buu Loc had no authority and little prestige among Nationalist Congressmen. I am sure that Tam had done his best but he had been removed from any connection or authority over Congress by Bao Dai's order. Quat told me he would do his best to get such resolution but that owing temper and composition of Congress it would be difficult if not impossible. Most that could be hoped for were friendly and grateful references to France in closing speech of Congress President Kim.

Principal groups in Congress and their leaders on sidelines were aware, I believe, of necessity of tendering an olive branch to French official and public opinion, but no one had courage to make any motion or say anything in public which would expose him then or afterwards to dread accusation of being pro-French. This natural pusillanimity was heightened by extremely vocal activity of such "rallies" as Vu Van Huyen and Pham Huu Chuong who were quick to denounce utterances in Congress smacking of anything but most rabid nationalist stand.

Apart from this important consideration, neither congressional groups nor Dai Viet had organizational control over their own delegates to Congress.

HEATH

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[3] Bishop of Phat Diem.

651.51G/10–1853 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL Saigon, October 18, 1953—3 p. m.

683. Repeated information Paris 206, Hanoi 105. Reference: Embtel 672 (Paris 200, Hanoi 103) October 17. Statement contained reference telegram that it seemed probable Congress was cleverly sabotaged by pro-Viet Minh stooges in passage motion against adherence French Union may be misleading to Department. While reports name Vu Van Huyen (also known as Quynh), Viet Minh Rallie, as leader in movement to strike phrase "in its present form" from motion on association with France, it is somewhat rash to charge Viet Minh infiltration from this fact.

Naturally, it is possible that Viet Minh had agents in Congress, and it is certain that Communists would have infiltrated if at all feasible. Nevertheless, motion appears rather the product of emotional, irresponsible nationalism. How distinguish between nationalist fighting with Viet Minh, nationalists on this side who secretly or openly believe their battle is being fought by Viet Minh, and thoroughly anti-Communist nationalists who distrust and even hate the French? Except for responsible leaders, probably most Vietnamese in emotional thinking would like remove French "presence". Only intellectual recognition of need of French protection against Communist threat makes Vietnamese willing to enter alliance granting economic and cultural privileges to France in return for military and economic assistance.

In sum, we should say anti-French Union motion resulted from temporary disregard of political and military realities emotional reaction to amendment of hard, ruthless debaters such as Huyen and Chuong, and almost complete unawareness of impact motion on French and even US willingness continue fight Vietnamese and free world's war against Communist aggression.

Heath

751G.00/10–1953 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET Paris, October 19, 1953—3 p. m.

1523. Vidal this morning underlined difficulties in Cabinet of which Bidault spoke to Secretary (Secto 27)[1] from group advocating negotiations. He said action of Vietnam Congress now being exploited by this group along line that military victory would require long time and additional forces which could not be sent, that France was receiving little help and much ingratitude from Vietnamese and had nothing tangible to expect from victory even if it were possible. Group, therefore, clamoring more insistently for some form of five-power negotiation. He said Laniel was determined to continue his present policy in Indochina but that this group was making his task increasingly difficult.

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[1] Telegram Secto 27 from London, Oct. 18, summarized a meeting between Secretary Dulles and Foreign Minister Bidault which occurred on the afternoon of Oct. 16. A variety of issues were discussed. The telegram indicated that "Bidault said he will continue to hold line in cabinet re Indochina but he has problem because two elements within cabinet who wish to negotiate." For text of Secto 27, see volume v.

ACHILLES

751G.00/10-2053 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, October 20, 1953—8 p. m.

1558. Repeated information Saigon 149. Laniel opened afternoon session Assembly with government statement on Indochina.[1] Following high points:

Government policy remains "if Vietnam really interested in joining French Union it would be on free and equal basis". Full confidence in Navarre. Indigenous forces being increased to 200,000 by January 1, 1954 and 250,000 by end year. This only made possible by US aid. One of purposes Vietnam Congress to "fix terms association with France on basis of equality". Negotiations will "fix means of consolidating independence states within French Union". "Government recognizes need for debate on Indochina but sees no need to advance date".

Statement weak and ineffective. Glossed over all important issues arising from Congresses actions while quoting empty final declaration of confidence in Bao Dai[2] and latter's flowery statement of yesterday

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[1] For the text of the statement by Premier Laniel and the debate which followed, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1953, Débats*, pp. 4393-4394.

[2] The resolution under reference was adopted by the National Congress on Oct. 17. A translation of the text, sent to Washington in telegram 686 from Saigon, Oct. 19, read as follows:

"National Congress places entire confidence in His Majesty Bao Dai, Chief of State, to conduct forthcoming negotiations in Paris to realize complete independence Vietnam and form with France voluntary association respecting interests and sovereignty and insuring reciprocity of rights and obligations of the two nations.

"National Congress expresses its thanks to French Republic and to United States for aid given Vietnam in order consolidate its national independence." (751G.00/10-1953)

In telegram 690 from Saigon, Oct. 19, Ambassador Heath reported that the resolution had not been translated into French for the Congress, nor had it been subject to a formal vote. It was considered to have been passed by acclamation. The Ambassador stated that, nevertheless, the anti-French Union resolution had been counteracted, at least on paper. (651.51G/10-1953)

(Embtel 1536).[3] Neglected express valid points that debate this time will have adverse reaction on morale military forces now in action and will prejudice position French delegation forthcoming negotiations.

Received unenthusiastically, followed immediately by consideration interpellations. After plea by Savary (Socialist) in favor seeking negotiated peace, Assembly proceeded to question fixing date debate. Overwhelming majority voted against government's desire to postpone debate, whereupon, Laniel asked by Herriot[4] "when does government choose". Replied "as soon as possible after agricultural debate (now in progress and interrupted for Indochina interpellations). Accordingly proposed for afternoon October 23, to continue without interruption other subjects until ended. Approved unanimously.

Apparent throughout that Assembly sentiment strongly opposed any delay. Even early show of hands vote on question fixing date was strongly pro with all Left, Gaullists and most MRP and Radicals voting in favor.

DILLON

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[3] In telegram 1536 from Paris, Oct. 19, not printed, Ambassador Dillon transmitted a summary of a statement issued by Bao Dai that day. The Chief of State expressed satisfaction with the conference in general, attributed the resolution repudiating membership in the French Union to a misunderstanding, and stated that the attachment of affection felt by Vietnam for France was not in question. He also said that it was necessary to develop bonds of equal and voluntary cooperation without delay. (751G.00/10-1953)

[4] Edouard Herriot, President of the National Assembly.

651.51G/10-2153 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, October 21, 1953—6:58 p. m.

695. Department continues much concerned at repercussions in France and elsewhere of ill-considered action Vietnamese National Congress Oct 16. Although Department hopes and believes that statesmanlike action and utterances of Bao Dai, Tam on one hand and Laniel, Bidault on other will prevent damage from becoming irreparable, Department believes essential find ways revitalize concept mutuality of interest between France and Vietnam. Your continuing views and comments would be appreciated.

Department deplores atmosphere prevailing at National Congress, utterances and resolutions of which have jeopardized war effort upon successful outcome of which lives and property most members of Congress in effect depend. Failure of Congress to express appreciation of efforts and sacrifices of 300,000 Vietnamese fighting Viet Minh appears even more extraordinary than failure to express similar sentiments regarding essential French sacrifices and effort. Bao Dai statements have helped but insufficiently.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Also sent to Paris as telegram 1526 and as Tomac 3.

Mutuality of interest in outcome of struggle is major present factor which needs emphasis and Department confident everything possible being done Saigon and Paris.

In addition however there is problem of reconstruction which will arise when war is won (if it is lost, neither French nor we will have any such problem). That problem will include necessity for providing reconstruction of country devastated by eight years of war, restoration of communications and reintegration into national life of several hundred thousand soldiers. Vietnam will need French help for this purpose and France will perhaps continue to need our assistance. (There is obviously no commitment which can be made on our behalf at this time.) Department wonders however whether establishment of high level planning authority for purpose of laying foundations of reconstruction-rehabilitation effort might not be useful. Perhaps this authority should spring from Vietnamese initiative with French invited to participate. Prospect of fruitful cooperation in constructive work after war is won might have sobering effect on political dreamers and doctrinaires. It might divert attention from constitutional verbiage and empty demagoguery and start people thinking of and perhaps developing vested interest in the practical problems which will face the new Vietnam made possible by current expenditure of Franco-Vietnamese blood and US-French-Vietnamese treasure.

Department advances above purely tentatively and would appreciate your comment and comments derived your continuing discussion with French and Vietnamese contacts.[2]

DULLES

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[2] In telegram 745 from Saigon, Oct. 27, Ambassador Heath stated the following: "I desire to stress that were US to approach Vietnamese authorities with suggestion for high level planning agency to lay foundations for reconstruction and rehabilitation in Vietnam, it would most certainly imply in Vietnamese eyes at least a moral commitment for US to continue substantial aid through an indefinite future and to a Vietnamese Government the outlines of which can only at this juncture be dimly perceived.

"In our view US policy will be better served should we continue as in past to count on France as principal source of economic and other aid to these nascent independent states of Indochina." (651.51G/10–2753)

In telegram 1601 from Paris, Oct. 23, Ambassador Dillon recommended against raising the matter of reconstruction with French authorities in view of the "present highly charged atmosphere overshadowed by forthcoming assembly IC debate." (751G.00/10–2353)

751G.00/10–2253 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT PARIS, October 22, 1953—1 p. m.

1575. Repeated information Saigon 153. Saigon eyes only for Ambassador. Limit distribution. Laniel feels that his government may be in serious difficulties in coming Indochina debate. He is asking for our help. He feels that it will be of real assistance to him if the Secretary or the President could make a public statement on Indochina prior to next Tuesday[1] when the Assembly debate is expected to reach its height. The key item which he hopes can be mentioned in such a statement is a reiteration of the feeling we expressed toward the French Union in the communiqué after the ministerial meetings in Washington last July.[2]

This matter was first raised and discussed extensively by Embassy officer with Jacquet and Fouchet, of Laniel's Cabinet, during the course of yesterday.[3] Last night, MacArthur and I dined alone with Laniel, and he put great emphasis on the help that such a declaration would be to him.[4] I am sure that the Cabinet knows that he is requesting such a declaration from us and would be greatly disappointed if we cannot find a way to help.

Laniel told us that Bao Dai is leaving shortly for Vietnam, and that he hoped to be in a position on Tuesday to announce to the Assembly the names of the Vietnamese delegation which will come here for negotiations. We have just learned that Bao Dai plans to leave on Monday (Embtel 1573).[5]

There follows a series of suggestions for such a statement in the form of an informal draft which would be satisfactory to the French. Laniel emphasizes that these thoughts are only suggestions, and he has no desire or intention to suggest to Washington in any detail what we should say. However, [as] I mentioned before, he emphasized numerous times the importance of including a complimentary statement regarding the French Union as it is presently constituted and the importance of this lies in the fact that Laniel feels that it will be absolutely impossible to change the fundamental concept of the French

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[1] Oct. 27.

[2] For the pertinent portion of the communiqué, July 14, see p. 678.

[3] The memorandum by First Secretary Gibson of his conversation with Secretary of State for the Associated States Jacquet on the evening of Oct. 21 is not printed. (751G.00/10–2153)

[4] The dinner conversation was reported in telegram 1592 from Paris, Oct. 23. The telegram summarized discussion of European matters and simply stated that Laniel "was much harassed by the Indochina problem." (740.5/10–2353)

[5] Telegram 1573 from Paris, Oct. 22, read as follows: "High Commissariat Vietnam has issued communiqué stating Bao Dai, having received report on Congress from Buu Loc, has decided return Vietnam by air October 26. This confirmed by Commissariat." (751G.11/10–2253)

Union, as set forth in the constitution which, in any event, provides for full equality for its member states (Embtel 1574).[6] Changes that he has in mind are in the status of Vietnam within the French Union. He expects it to achieve full equality with other members of the Union, which is the ultimate goal for all members. Viewed in this light, the declaration by the National Congress in Saigon that Vietnam would not join the French Union in its present form is still entirely unsatisfactory if it is read to require a change in the fundamental constitution.

Suggested draft follows:

At the moment when an important offensive is underway in Indochina by the forces of the French Union, we find it inopportune to engage in any form of public speculation which might detract from the essential task of attaining the victory without which "independence" is a meaningless word.

The independence of Vietnam and the other Associated States is assured in the declaration of the French Govt of July 3, 1953. Provision has been made to determine the future relationship between France and each of the Associated States by means of free unrestricted negotiations on a basis of equality. The negotiations with Laos are already in their final stages while those with Vietnam and Cambodia will take place in the near future.

Regarding the question of the French Union, it is recalled that the Foreign Ministers of the United States, United Kingdom and France in the communiqué issued after their Washington talks of last July stated: "The French Union offers a harmonious and flexible framework within which the mutual interest of the participants may be guaranteed and their individual interests reconciled".

Our own contribution to the common effort permits us to remind our Vietnamese friends that defeat will result in their subjugation under a form of totalitarian colonialism far worse than anything they have experienced in the past and will nullify the progress toward self-government they have already made and have every reason to expect to consummate in the near future. It is to avoid such a catastrophe and hasten the ultimate victory that the United States Government has recently increased its aid to France and the Associated States for the conduct of the war in the amount of $385 million in the hope that those responsible in Vietnam will join their efforts to those of the courageous French and Vietnamese soldiers who have given their lives to assure Vietnam the independence to which it aspires. *End of suggested draft.*

It is our opinion that this debate can be very serious for the Laniel Government. As we pointed out last summer, it is very probable that, when Communist votes are included, there is a majority in the French Assembly favorable to leaving Indochina. Unless Laniel can achieve stronger party discipline than has been noted in the past, it is perfectly possible that his government could fall. The situation is certainly serious, and I hope that Washington will be able to find a way to help.[7]

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[6] Not printed, but see footnote 1, *infra.*

MacArthur concurs in this telegram.

DILLON

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[7] In telegram 1581 from Paris, Oct. 22, Ambassador Dillon provided the following additional information: "Re Embtel 1575. Both Matignon [office of Premier Laniel] and Bidault have expressed hope today that any statement we find it possible to make on Indochina will include reference to our hopes for an early peace. This might be done by adding phrase 'and thus help to bring about an early successful termination of hostilities' to last sentence of suggested draft contained reference telegram.

"*Comment:* French obviously wish to avoid any impression here we closing door to possibility negotiated peace. US on other hand must emphasize thought that any termination of hostilities must be successful." (751G.00/10–2253)

In telegram 719 from Saigon, Oct. 23, Ambassador Heath stated the following: "We heartily concur suggested draft set forth Paris telegram niact 1575, repeated Saigon 153. However, we are less enthusiastic over suggestion added in Paris telegram 1581, repeated Saigon 157 since it might encourage those persons in French Government who desire a negotiated peace to feel this gives US endorsement to their view. Thus suggest that statement be made by President himself.

"If statement is approved, we propose to translate it into Vietnamese and send copy of text to each member of recent Vietnamese National Congress with my card." (751G.00/10–2353)

751G.00/10–2353 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, October 23, 1953—8 a. m.

1593. Repeated information Saigon 159. Embassy officer saw Vietnamese High Commissioner Prince Buu Loc yesterday at latter's request. Had hour interview just before Buu Loc proceeded to Matignon receive French "note" from Laniel for Bao Dai and Government.[1] He will take note to Cannes today and discuss action to be taken with Bao Dai before latter's departure for Saigon October 26.

It was immediately evident that Buu Loc is very seriously worried about present atmosphere Paris concerning Indochina and he repeatedly asked officer if Embassy could exert its influence on French to preserve their "sangfroid" stand and not take any action which might extend present crisis. Described reaction French officials with whom he had conferred since his return from Saigon (presumably including Laniel and Jacquet) as being unexpectedly severe. He sympathized entirely with their reasons but regretted vehemence their attitude and attributed it to failure appreciate political immaturity Delegates of National Congress. He himself had been equally shocked at resolution advocating break with French Union "in its present form". He believes it to be immature, unwise and deplorable in its effect. He had had no forewarning of it else he should have tried stave it off. His efforts counteract its effects later had only been partially successful.

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[1] On Oct. 21, following a meeting of the Council of Ministers, the French Government issued a communiqué announcing that a note would be transmitted to the Vietnamese Government asking for an explanation of its position in light of the resolutions passed by the Vietnamese National Congress. The text of the communiqué was transmitted to Washington in telegram 1574 from Paris, Oct. 22. (751G.00/10–2253) A summary of the main points of the French note was transmitted in telegram 296 from Hanoi, Nov. 19. (651.51G/11–1953) The Vietnamese Government replied on Nov. 16, stating that it reaffirmed its wish to maintain the ties of free association between France and Vietnam, but insisted on full sovereignty and a relationship of equals. A translation of the Vietnamese reply was sent to Washington in telegram 906 from Saigon, Nov. 23. (651.51G/11–2353)

Vietnamese is as much as individualist as Frenchman but lacks latter's political sophistication. When for first time he found himself in democratically representative assembly, he lost his balance and indulged in emotional extravagances import of which he did not understand. Buu Loc was convinced most delegates, with possible exception recent Viet Minh converts who may have purposely set out sabotage Congress, now realized what they had done and would undo it if they could without losing "face". He quoted last night's *France-Soir* article by Lucien Bodard ("best journalist in Indochina") to effect he had interrogated numerous delegates of Congress and had failed discover single one who would now declare he wished either break with France or replace Bao Dai as being entirely accurate. He regretted French public opinion had not paid sufficient attention favorable declarations which had been made to Congress. He quoted opening and closing speeches Tran Trong Kim and his own first speech as examples.

When questioned about Tam's role in Congress, Buu Loc was especially bitter. Tam was so concerned with his own doubtful political future, he did little hold Congress in line. He was convinced Buu Loc wished replace him as Foreign Minister which was absurd.

Buu Loc hoped terms French note he was about receive would not be too severe. If it attempts force Vietnamese "retract publicly and lose face" it will fail and all will be lost. Neither must French open juridical argument which could go on for months. If this deplorable "incident" could be glossed over by mere understanding, tact and diplomacy both sides, he is convinced mutually satisfactory solution can be found. French Union should not pose an unsurmountable problem. There is nothing in French Constitution which prevents Vietnam from exercising its full independence while retaining its association with France on free and equal basis in French Union.

Buu Loc was hopeful Bao Dai's presence Saigon would do much ease tension and bring dissidents down to earth. "Bao Dai has both his feet on ground while most of delegates appeared have theirs in air". He took particular pains compliment Ambassadors Heath and De Jean for their role influencing delegates to be moderate. They both had outstanding appreciation of issues involved and "true friendship both Vietnam and France".

In answer our question about effect all this would have on planned negotiations, he replied Laniel wanted Bao Dai name Vietnamese delegation immediately but it was impossible him do so under present circumstances referring particularly assembly debate and French "note".

We were deeply impressed throughout by Buu Loc's air of gravity which we had never seen present in him before. There is no doubt this time he believes French have been pushed too far and something must be done quickly make amends. As Department knows, Buu Loc's reactions are usually reflection Bao Dai.

DILLON

751G.00/10–2353 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, October 23, 1953—7 : 56 p. m.

1556. Secretary planning issue following statement re Indochina (Embtels 1575 and 1581)[2] Monday:

I should like to express my satisfaction at the recent announcement that the Franco-Laotian negotiations have been concluded with the complete agreement of the two nations concerned.[3] It will be recalled in this connection that on July 3 France declared she was ready to negotiate with each of the three states on a basis of equality, with a view to completing their independence. The successful conclusion of the Franco-Laotian negotiations is an important step forward in the developing relationships with the French Union. It augurs well for the forthcoming political talks between France and Cambodia, and between France and Viet Nam.

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[1] Drafted by McBride of WE and Hoey of PSA. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 717.

[2] For telegram 1575, see p. 840. For the text of telegram 1581, see footnote 7, p. 842. In a memorandum to Secretary Dulles of Oct. 23, Assistant Secretaries Merchant and Robertson recommended that the Secretary or the President make a statement on Indochina on Oct. 26. The memorandum was originally accompanied by three attachments: telegram 1575, telegram 1581, and a draft statement. These attachments are not present with the file copy. A marginal notation on the source text of the memorandum indicates that the Secretary redrafted and approved the proposed statement on Oct. 23. (751G.00/10–2353) The text of the statement contained in this telegram is presumably that approved by Secretary Dulles.

[3] For text of the Treaty of Friendship Between France and Laos of Oct. 22, 1953, see *L'Année Politique, 1953*, pp. 582–586. The text, without annexed conventions, is in *Documents on International Affairs, 1953*, pp. 476–477.

With regard to the future relationship of France and the Associated States of Indochina, I recall the statement of the Foreign Ministers of the United States, United Kingdom and France in the communiqué issued following their talks in Washington last July: "The French Union offers a harmonious flexible framework within which the mutual interest of the participants may be guaranteed and their individual interests reconciled."

I am confident that within that flexible framework the forthcoming negotiations may be successful.

I should like also to emphasize the vital importance of that vigorous prosecution of the war against the Communist enemy in which the armed forces of France and Viet Nam are now engaged. For unless the Communist aggression fails talk about independence is meaningless.

Our deep concern with the Indochinese situation has been demonstrated by our recent decision to increase our aid substantially. We do not want to see the subjugation of the peoples of the Associated States, under a form of evil totalitarian colonialism which would nullify the self-government they have already achieved as well as the future enjoyment of their independence. We hope fervently that the results of this additional United States assistance will be to strengthen the four free nations who are fighting together in Indochina to frustrate the aggressor, and thus help bring about an early and successful termination of hostilities. *End Statement.*

Department will instruct later re release time. In meantime text should not be shown or discussed French and Vietnamese officials.

DULLES

751G.00/10–2453 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, October 24, 1953—2 p. m.

1615. Repeated information Saigon 166. Indochina debate opened afternoon October 23[1] in unexpectedly calm atmosphere. Although visitors galleries, diplomatic, press seats filled Chamber third empty.

Herriot's and Laniel's opening statements spoke of "necessary but very difficult" debate. All those who intervene must avoid adding to anti-French sentiments which might affect army fighting in Indochina. The debate is to be free but "dignified".

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[1] For the record of the debate on Indochina policy which occurred at the meeting of the National Assembly on Friday, Oct. 23, 1953, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1953, Débats*, pp. 4538–4550.

Thereafter 4 interpellations heard. General Aumeran (Ind Rep) pursued argument that Indochina policy had been wrong Baie d'Along agreements. Prewar status should not have been changed. Solution is military one. Control Sino-Indochina frontier and cut Vietminh off from its supplies thus causing movement to collapse. Second interpellation by Giovoni (Communist) followed well-known party line. Third by Dronne (Ouras) [*RPF*] took line that Vietnam could not be prevented leaving union. In that case France should make new arrangement, "better marriage with France than concubinage with China." Fourth by Boutbien (Socialist) along party line of need to pursue every opening which might lead to negotiations.

Surprisingly orderly procedure of debate interrupted only once by incident involving Pleven and Communist benches. Former intervened during Giovoni intervention to state that party had "plotted defeat of French Army in Indochina". This led to barrage of invective from Communist benches led by Duclos who terminated display by hurling ultimate in insults at Pleven, employee (salarie) of "Americans".

Session gave impression that emotional tension of days following Vietnam Congress action was spending itself and government's position improving. Ten more interpellations remain to be heard on Tuesday when session will undoubtedly be more lively but government's position will have been fortified by effects signature Franco-Laotian treaty, Tam's salutary speech,[2] Bao Dai's return and Department's statement (Deptel 1556).[3]

DILLON

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[2] Reference is to a conciliatory statement delivered by Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Van Tam at a press conference of Oct. 23.

[3] *Supra.*

751G.00/10–2653 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, October 26, 1953—8 p. m.

1639. Repeated information Saigon 168. Following is background of French request (Embtel 1626)[1] not to use proposed statement for Secretary on Indochina:

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[1] Telegram 1626 from Paris, Oct. 26, read as follows:

"Laniel phoned me shortly after noon today to tell me that while he felt proposed statement (Deptel 1556) would be very helpful for Bao Dai in Indochina, it would not be helpful to him in his forthcoming debate in the National Assem-

Department's text was handed Foreign Office and Matignon today as per instruction Deptel 1559.[2] Parodi, Bidault, Vidal and Laniel all dealt with matter. From beginning they were disturbed with penultimate paragraph beginning "I should like also to emphasize". As Department aware French are very sensitive on this score. No government official would dare condone anything being said on Indochina at this time which might be interpreted as discouraging possibilities of negotiated peace. Foreign Office understood differences between United States and French approach on this question but felt that if statement could even be willfully misinterpreted to lend credence to charge that United States aid had bought French acquiescence to policy unconditional surrender of Viet Minh and chances of negotiated peace therefore reduced, it would be best not make any statement.

Their concern with penultimate paragraph counterbalanced by pleasure with first three which they believe excellent and would have beneficial effect in Vietnam. They hope Department will agree to use them on another occasion.

Main reason request statement not be delivered this time not objections text, however, but widespread impression atmosphere now improved here on Indochina. Signature Franco-Laotian agreements, Tam's salutary statement, announcement of Bao Dai's return Saigon today, news King of Cambodia's forthcoming return to Phnom Penh and relative calm of Friday's Assembly debate have all served reduce tension. Mendes-France's opinion that government would survive

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bly. He said he had taken certain political samples, and that the phrase referring to 'vigorous prosecution of the war' would be badly received here as indicating we were trying to force France to fight even harder. He, therefore, asked that the statement be deferred until such time as the debate here is finished, and I receive his personal clearance to release the statement. He said he would let me know personally as soon as it was all right to release it. He made no suggestion that the statement itself should be amended as I presume he realizes that the phrase in question is necessary from our own political point of view, even though unpalatable in France at the moment. He ended by repeating that he thought the statement should be made and would be most useful in Indochina." (751G.00/10-2653)

For telegram 1556 to Paris, Oct. 23, see p. 844.

[2] Telegram 1559 to Paris, Oct. 24, read as follows:

"Re Deptel 1556 French Embassy under instructions has delivered message that unless Secretary's statement concerning Indochina adequately meets French suggestions regarding possible termination of hostilities, it would be better to have no statement at all.

"Planned release time statement is noon Washington time Monday. You are authorized show statement to French Sunday. Statement will not be released until clearance received from you. We hope statement which Secretary has edited will be fully satisfactory." (751G.00/10-2453)

Indochina debate (Embtel 1584)[3] now appears to be growing. That such was case repeatedly stated today during discussions by officials both Laniel's and Reynaud's Cabinet. Under these circumstances, "it would be foolish use heavy artillery (statement) now when it might be more acutely needed later (just before Vietnam negotiations, for example)".

Foreign Office and Matignon took great pains to express their thanks for United States understanding and cooperation.[4]

DILLON

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[3] In telegram 1584 from Paris, Oct. 22, not printed, Ambassador Dillon reported that French Radical Socialist leader Pierre Mendès-France had expressed the opinion that the Laniel government would survive the debate on Indochina. Mendès-France also said that he hoped the government would not fall and would not himself participate in the debate. (751.00/10–2253)

[4] Livingston Merchant, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, informed Secretary Dulles of developments regarding the proposed statement in a memorandum of Oct. 26 which read as follows:

"We were informed this morning by Ambassador Dillon (Paris telegram 1626) that he has been in touch with Laniel concerning your proposed statement on Indochina and Laniel now feels that while the statement may be useful at an appropriate time, particularly in Indochina, he does not think it would be wise to release it today. In a telephone conversation with the Embassy this morning, Mr. Bonsal was informed further that this decision of Laniel's does not arise from dissatisfaction over the text of the statement but rather reflects the greatly improved Parliamentary situation in Paris.

"In the circumstances we are transmitting to Paris a new paragraph to be added to the statement along the lines of Ambassador Bonnet's request of last evening. This paragraph, which follows closely what you said in your St. Louis Legion speech, reads as follows:

'We want peace in Indochina. The proposed political conference on Korea relates in the first instance to that problem. But growing out of that conference could come, if Red China wants it, an end of aggression and restoration of peace in Indochina. The United States would welcome such a development.'

"We will now await further word from the French as to when they think it desirable to release the statement. This will probably be at the conclusion of the Indochina debate in Paris." (751G.00/10–2653)

The request from Ambassador Bonnet has not been more specifically identified.

651.51G/10–2653: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

SECRET SAIGON, October 26, 1953—4 p. m.

736. Repeated information Paris 222, Hanoi unnumbered. Re Deptel 695, October 21. It seems obvious that in this period of dangerous Franco–Vietnamese tension caused by the uncontrolled actions of the National Congress held in Saigon we should use every effort to per-

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

suade French authorities and public opinion to remain calm. Buu Loc's recommendation to this effect (Paris 1593, October 23 to Department) is entirely valid. Discouraging as the incident of the Congress may be the French by no means need give up hope of obtaining all of their legitimate objectives in Vietnam, the principal one being its remaining in the French Union.

It is fortunately true that Vietnamese "leaders" have finally been somewhat alarmed by French reaction to resolutions of Congress. Members of Embassy and myself are taking advantage of every opportunity to increase that feeling of salutary alarm. In my speech on UN Day[3] I took occasion to stress theme that only French military contribution can safeguard Vietnamese independence.

One of things that would lessen rabid irresponsible nationalism of Vietnamese "leaders" and "intellectuals" would be substantial victories by Navarre, but it is doubtful, unless unusual luck and opportunity attend his battalions, that we can expect such victories before first months of next year at earliest. To some degree this rabid nationalism and anti-French expression is due to a belief or a hope that French are weakening. It is unfortunately an ingrained Vietnamese tendency to respect and rally to strength and to pounce on weakness. There is also fear lest, after all, Viet Minh win or obtain ascendancy.

One of most useful restraints among more comprehending elements of Vietnamese "intelligentsia" is fear lest France conclude a face-saving armistice with Viet Minh. This possibility should very discreetly and very sparingly be held out by spokesman in French Government. However, it should be obvious to French Government that an armistice at this time would result in eventual victory for Viet Minh.

One of lessons from Congress is danger, certainly during next months, of reconvening Congress or setting up a National Assembly (which Tam seems determined to do.) Unless it can be disciplined, organized, and controlled by responsible elements in the Vietnamese body politic, which seems a very unlikely early development, there will be trouble. Among potential "responsible elements" at the present time are the Catholic hierarchy of Bishops (with possible exception of Bishop Thus [*Tu*]), the Dai Viet Party (if sensible elements represented by Sung, Governor Tri, and Quat can gain real control of and heal present divisions in party), the Cao Daists (which are in need of a strong control which Cao Daist Pope and leaders were unable to wield over their delegation in Congress), and last, and probably most important, Bao Dai himself. Vietnamese National Army might be a "responsible element" if Quat and Bao Dai could establish ascendency over officers corps. It is doubted that General Hinh will ever be able to impress his will and obtain ascendancy over officers corps but there is no Vietnamese higher officer clearly in sight to replace him and provide dynamic will and necessary ability. Colonel Vy is mentioned as a possible successor. He seems an intelligent and fine officer but I doubt that he combines requisite qualities.

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[3] Oct. 24.

There is theoretical possibility that replacing Tam by, say, Governor Tri, might incline rabid nationalists to support government and adopt a more cooperative and reasonable attitude toward France. It is by no means sure that Tri's accession would be followed by popular acclaim and one must remember that Cochin Chinese leaders feel the presidency should be in Cochin Chinese hands. It would be regrettable to see unusual strength of will, courage and energy of President Tam disappear from Vietnamese administration. Perhaps a solution would be for Bao Dai, at least nominally, to assume Presidency of Council, retain both Tam and Tri and perhaps rally other elements of strength to government. To date, Bao Dai, both on principle and because he dislikes arduous labors of direct government, has rejected this solution.

Another telling weapon for rallying mass of Vietnamese behind legitimate government, use of meaningful propaganda, has been neglected by Vietnamese authorities. Propaganda against Viet Minh has made significant progress during past 3 years, but government has failed use best and incontrovertible argument that Viet Minh is agent for Communist China, preparing way for Chinese invasion. Only Bao Dai has publicly named Communist China as Vietnam's enemy in his 1953 Tet speech. Other Vietnamese leaders have hung back, despite importuning of our information service, because they fear offending China. This is one more instance of Vietnamese personal insurance of keeping good graces of all sides. Vietnamese must be prevailed upon to hammer away at theme of Communist China, new version of traditional enemy of Vietnam, waiting for Viet Minh to open door.

Re proposal penultimate paragraph reference telegram we find certain objections to raising problem of postwar reconstruction at this time. Our reaction to this proposal will be contained in a separate telegram.[3]

HEATH

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[3] See footnote 2, p. 839.

751.13/10–2753

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)

[Extract]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] October 27, 1953.

Subject: Visit of Maurice Schumann[1]

Participants: The Secretary
Ambassador Bonnet
M. Maurice Schumann
Mr. Merchant, EUR

. . . .

The Secretary then remarked that he was under the impression the debate in the French Assembly on Indochina was going well. Mr. Schumann confirmed this but added that war-weariness and the unhappy action of the Vietnamese Congress recently had a bad and continuing effect on public opinion. He spoke of his appreciation of the helpful statement which the Secretary had been prepared to issue on the subject. The Secretary then went on to emphasize that the measures courageously adopted by the French Government and our added assistance for more vigorous prosecution of the war in Indochina seemed to him the best measures designed to gain peace and a successful result. He pointed out that negotiations can only rest on a position of strength if they are to be successful and he cited the Korean analogy. Mr. Schumann agreed but pointed out the strength of groups in Parliament which were opposed to an increased military effort in Indochina. He emphasized, however, that the government was firmly of the mind that they must move ahead resolutely.

The Secretary then went on to discuss the Bidault idea raised in the past of the possible extension on a broader basis of the agenda and composition of the projected political conference on Korea. He said that just as we expected our partners to permit our views on Korea to be predominant, so in any later extension of the conference he would expect the French to have the major voice in any discussion of Indochina. He emphasized, however, that we can take no steps at this time which might jeopardize the political conference specifically directed to consider the Korean problem.

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[1] Maurice Schumann, French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Foreign Minister), was a member of the French Delegation to the Eighth Session of the UN General Assembly at New York, Sept. 15–Dec. 9, 1953. On Sept. 25, during the general debate phase of proceedings, Schumann had delivered an address which included a statement indicating the willingness of France to enter into diplomatic negotiations to end the war in Indochina. For the remarks under reference, see United Nations, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighth Session, Plenary Meetings*, p. 155.

Schumann was on visit in Washington prior to returning to Paris.

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851G.131/10-2853

Memorandum of Conversation, by Francis G. Jarvis of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] October 28, 1953.

Subject: Plan for Allocation of Foreign Exchange to Petroleum Companies in the Associated States

Participants: Standard Vacuum Oil Company:
  Mr. Eichholzer
  Mr. Ulrich
  Mr. Geddes
Department of State:
  PSA—Mr. Bonsal
  PED—Mr. Eakens [1]
  PSA—Mr. Getz
  PSA—Mr. Jarvis
FOA:
  Mr. Morrison [2]
  Mr. Tannhauser

Following the usual exchange of pleasantries, Mr. Bonsal invited the Standard Vacuum Oil Company representatives to open the discussion. Mr. Eichholzer [3] outlined details of the French OCLL decree of 1939, which was reaffirmed in 1946, and provides the basis for imports of petroleum by the several companies in Indochina. He said that under this decree the petroleum trade in Indochina is divided among the three marketing companies on the basis of their average sales in 1937, 1938, and 1939. No new companies may enter the market. Stanvac became restive with this situation and notified OCLL of its intention to withdraw, preferring a system of competition. Believing that there had to be an alternative to the OCLL plan, Stanvac suggested that the Petroleum Branch of the Foreign Operations Administration develop a plan to replace the OCLL import control plan. Stanvac endorses the plan which FOA has developed.

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[1] R. H. S. Eakens, Chief of the Petroleum Staff.

[2] Clinton Morrison, Deputy Regional Director, Office of Far Eastern Operations, Foreign Operations Administration.

[3] Eichholzer had recently spent 11 days in Saigon. He briefed Bonsal on his visit on Oct. 27, reporting that the outlook of the French business community was very pessimistic. The memorandum of this conversation by Getz of PSA is not printed. (WE files, lot 54 D 467, "Indochina")

Mr. Morrison briefly outlined the FOA plan. (See Musto A128, September 19, 1953 [4]) Mr. Eichholzer went on to say that the Ambassador at Saigon and Mr. McClintock of the Embassy had suggested to him that he outline for Mr. Bonsal impressions he had obtained at Saigon. Mr. Eichholzer gathered the impression that the FOA plan, in order to succeed in the Associated States, would have to be "pushed" by the U.S. Government. Mr. Eichholzer continued that the Minister of Commerce has received the plan from the FOA Mission and it is under study in his Department.

Mr. Bonsal said that he was not familiar with the technical aspects of the plan but from the brief outline of the plan presented at this meeting, it did not appear to him that the subject plan would cause concern in a normal situation. However, Mr. Bonsal expressed the opinion that the U.S. should not do anything which will divert attention of the people of Indochina from the main objective at present, which is to win the war. Mr. Bonsal also noted that even if the U.S. Government supports this plan with the four governments concerned, it is his opinion that the adoption of such a plan in Indochina will be a slow and complicated matter. Following a discussion of approximately one hour, Mr. Bonsal said that the Department will continue to follow developments in connection with this plan. He said that he was glad to have had the benefit of the views of the Standard Vacuum Oil Company representatives. Mr. Bonsal expressed his thanks to the Standard Vacuum Oil Company representatives and on this note the meeting ended.

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[4] Not printed.

751.00/10–2853 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, October 28, 1953—8 p. m.

1667. Repeated information Saigon 174. Assembly Indochina debate resumed morning October 27. Remaining ten interpellations were heard during course of day followed by general debate which continued until Laniel made statement at midnight. This in turn followed by consideration orders du jour (motions) which ended in adoption government-accepted Kuehn (ARS) motion at 6:20 a. m. (Embtel 1662, repeated Saigon 172.)[1]

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[1] For the record of the debate on Indochina in the National Assembly, Oct. 27–28, including the statement by Premier Laniel and the motion ultimately adopted, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1953, Débats*, pp. 4560–4587 and 4594–4617. For a translation of extracts from the statement by Premier Laniel, see Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, vol. I, pp. 209–214. Telegram 1662 from Paris,

Footnote continued on next page.

During course debate Indochina problem was dissected by all sides from all sides. Government's actions since 1945 subject to examination and criticism, much of it strongly biased, contradictory and unjust. There was great deal of individual enterprise in all groups but extreme left. It would now be difficult, if not impossible, define any party policy on Indochina other than those of Communists and Socialists. Examples of this Catroux's (Gaullist) comment after King [*Kir?*] tirade, during which he was heckled by own party, that he spoke only for himself and Daladier's (Radical) harangue which displeased many members his own party as well as others of center and right but was loudly applauded by Communists and Socialists. Little, if anything, constructive suggested and it became more and more evident that although Indochina was sorely painful subject for all and it was easy to talk for hours on how distressing it was, prescribing a treatment and cure was something else. Everyone was in favor of "negotiations" but only Communists said with whom, when and how (Ho Chi Minh, immediately and "emissaries available here"—probably themselves).

Laniel's intervention was well timed and effectively carried out. In a long (28 typed pages) speech, better delivered than his other recent Assembly statements, he faced issues squarely in a convincing and straightforward manner which appeared to gain him support as he proceeded. This later borne out by results. Speech's weakest portion was that which attempted to belittle the significance of Vietnam National Congress resolution. Its strongest the forthright manner with which it dealt with "negotiations" and other controversial subjects. Laniel had in his favor recent signature Franco–Laotian treaty, Tam's statement, recent French "note" to Bao Dai and Vietnam Government, and failure of his Assembly critics to build a constructive case. He used all these points.

Later corridor manipulations which resulted in innocuous motion accepted by government and voted by Assembly bore out thesis that no one can get majority approval today to Indochina policy which varies much from that present government.

As Herriot requested when debate was opened, it remained (rela-

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Footnote continued from preceding page.

Oct. 28, contained a summary translation of the motion adopted by the National Assembly by a vote of 315 to 257. The summary read as follows:

"Assembly addresses its confident respects and its admiring tribute to valiant troops of French Union who defend in SEA liberty and civilization and invites government define and apply a policy tending notably

"(*a*) To develop armed forces of Associated States in order relieve progressively French military effort,

"(*b*) To use every possible means in order lead to, through negotiation, a general pacification of Asia,

"(*c*) To assure on international plane a just equilibrium of efforts and sacrifices of free nations on different points of globe.

"And insists to government that defense and independence of Associated States be realized within framework of French Union.

"And, rejecting all additions, passes to business of day." (751.00/10–2853) tively) dignified throughout. Laniel's attitude remained faithful and substantial is somewhat varied from what it had been on other issues [*sic*]. Many leaders avoided subject entirely either by being absent (Mayer, Pinay and Mendes-France) or silent (Robert Schuman and Soustelle).

Detailed account, including Laniel's speech will follow by pouch.

DILLON

033.1100 NI/11-253 : Despatch

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 2, 1953.
No. 181

Subject: Conversations of Vice President Nixon with Bao Dai [1]

I presented the Vice President of the United States to the Vietnamese Chief of State on the afternoon of November 1. Accompanied by the Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. McClintock, we had more than an hour's conversation with Bao Dai, followed by later talks after the official dinner which His Majesty tendered the Vice President at his villa in Dalat. Three members of the official press party attended the dinner, which was felicitous not only in terms of Bao Dai's toast to the Vice President, but in the latter's response. Copies of both speeches form the sole enclosures to this despatch.[2]

In conversation before dinner, Bao Dai steadfastly refused to meet the Vice President's questions as to the possibility of greater personal activity on his part in assuming the functions of Commander-in-Chief of the Vietnamese Armed Forces. The Chief of State blandly insisted that he was already Commander-in-Chief, but wound deviously around the point of whether or not he should get into a uniform and stand in front of his soldiers.

On other subjects Bao Dai was more explicit. He said that the Vietnamese knew the French Constitution by heart; in fact, the Vietnamese were more current with the provisions of the French Constitution as they applied to the structure of the French Union than were most people in France itself. As now written, the French Constitution by definition makes membership in the French Union not compatible with absolute sovereignty. Therefore the present framework of the French Union is not satisfactory to Vietnam and must be changed if the Vietnamese are to be expected to attain complete independence and at the same time maintain ties with France.

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[1] Vice President Richard M. Nixon visited Indochina from Oct. 30 to Nov. 4 during the course of a tour of the Far East, South Asia, and the Near East. For a summary account of the Nixon visit to Indochina, see telegram 804 from Saigon, Nov. 6, p. 857. For the pertinent portion of Nixon's report to the National Security Council on Dec. 23 regarding his trip, see p. 929. Additional information on the Nixon visit to Indochina was transmitted to Washington in despatch 195 from Saigon, Nov. 7. (033.1100 NI/11-753)

[2] The enclosures are not printed.

Bao Dai readily conceded that there was no thought in his mind or that of any other responsible Vietnamese statesman to oust the French from Vietnam at the present time. He was fully aware of the fact that without French military assistance Vietnam would be an immediate prey to the Communist enemy.

Bao Dai did not feel that negotiations with the Vietminh were a practical possibility, nor did he anticipate that on the Communist side there would be an attempt to negotiate an armistice.

The Chief of State expressed gratification at the aid given by the United States in the past and particularly the making available of additional budgetary support to France to the extent of 385 million dollars in the current fiscal year. He said this had afforded his Government immense relief and gave the guarantee that his program of strengthening the National Army would be carried on without a halt. He said that he had asked the French Government for credits totaling 150 billion francs to substantiate this year's military program and was now assured by the prospect of American budgetary support for France in the amount of 385 million dollars that these credits would be forthcoming from the French Government.

DONALD R. HEATH

033.1100 NI/11–553 : Telegram

The Consul General at Hong Kong (Harrington) to the Department of State

SECRET HONG KONG, November 5, 1953—4 p. m.

873. Sent Saigon 38, repeated information Department 873, Paris 2. Codel–Nixon. For Ambassador from Vice President. Please convey following message from me to General Navarre:

"On leaving Indochina I wish once more to express my profound admiration for the French Union Forces in the field. Yesterday I had an opportunity to visit the troops in the Tonkin area and to talk with your excellent commanders. I am deeply impressed by the gallantry and devotion of these men. In casting about for ways in which the war can be brought to an even more speedy conclusion I have not failed to note the requests which you and others have made for more transport aircraft and I shall mention these requests in my report to the President. Although my examination of the military situation in Indochina admittedly has been very brief it has seemed to me that the training program does not come up to our expectations. I know you share the same concern. Might I with all respect offer the suggestion that possibly the goal we mutually desire to achieve of an early end to the war might be more quickly reached if there were increased emphasis on the training program. It has seemed to me that if a greater output were forthcoming from schools for all ranks the Vietnamese National Army would have the necessary cadre and trained men to meet the requirements suggested by the French National Assembly in first paragraph of the resolution it recently voted to Indochina.

Mrs. Nixon joins with me in warm regards to Madame Navarre and in sincere wishes for your success." [1]

HARRINGTON

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[1] In telegram 19 from Saigon to Tokyo, Nov. 11 (repeated to Washington as 829), Ambassador Heath transmitted the text in translation of the response of General Navarre to the Vice President's letter, which read as follows:

"I thank you sincerely for the good wishes which you were kind enough to express for myself and my troops.

"I am most grateful for your intention to support to the President of the US my request for matériel and in particular, with regard to airplanes of which I have the greatest need.

"I share your point of view that a better organization of training would, without doubt, improve the conditions for placing armies of Associated States on a war footing. I plan to study question with General O'Daniel who has already offered me the benefit of the experience of American officers who are conversant with methods employed by Korean army. We should not, however, hide fact that there are profound differences in type of war in Indochina and that in Korea with result that Korean experience is only partially applicable to Indochina and would be dangerous if it were not most carefully adapted (the situation here). In consequence, the training problem, as I remarked to you during our interview, is not the principal problem for forming armies of Associated States.

"I beg you to convey my respectful homage to Mrs. Nixon as well as the best wishes of my wife and remain,

"Most sincerely yours, H. Navarre." (033.1100 NI/11-1153)

033.1100 NI/11-653 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 6, 1953—7 p. m.

804. Repeated information Paris 233. For the President and the Secretary of State. Vice President and Mrs. Nixon's visit to Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos October 30–November 4 was an extremely successful one from standpoint both of our relations with and our policy towards Indochina and also with regard to French relations with Associated States. Their personalities, their tireless and sincere interest and friendliness in meeting people of all walks of life made a definitely good impression which echoed in local press. Clarity and warmth of Vice President's numerous speeches added conviction to general opinion that American desire to aid in winning this war against communism and in assisting countries toward security and progress is sincere and continuing. At same time, in almost every speech Vice President made clear necessity and importance of French military assistance and sacrifices if countries were to gain real freedom against aggression. In unexceptionable terms he promoted idea and necessity of Indochina's harmonious union or association with France and pointed out that any break in this association and unity could only result in a Communist victory. His visit to French and Vietnam-

ese units in action in "Mouette" (latest military operation in north) made an impression not only on troops and officers of units visited, but through press on Vietnamese public opinion as well. In conversations and in his talks Vice President clearly and persuasively indicated dangers of any talk of armistice except on terms that would entirely assure national security and independence.

Favorable press and radio publicity which preceded, attended and followed Vice President's visit was larger in volume than for any similar visit in Indochina. This publicity has registered and is still registering with Vietnamese readers and listeners, but even Vietnam, most literate of the Associated States, is not a newspaper country. Therefore to reach provinces and people we are using Vietnamese Information Service and USIA with their large coverage of towns and villages. Vietnamese army radio, moreover, has brought trip and and speeches to all army camps.

While in south, Vietnamese Government and Bao Dai gave lavish official dinners, as did the French, while Embassy in two receptions and a sizable dinner brought them into contact with various strata of Vietnamese, there was no popular manifestation which would enable them in Saigon to have been seen and perhaps have some contact with youth and population of city. This was in part due to reasons of security but, as I said to the Vice President, it is undoubtedly due to fact that any popular demonstration, which would have had to be organized or at least tacitly encouraged by Vietnamese Government, might have seemed invidious to French effort and presence here. At this stage of tension in Franco–Vietnamese relations and opposition in France toward continuation of French sacrifices in Indochina, Government obviously did not want to put on popular manifestation in favor of America which could not have been duplicated in case of a French official visit here. Jacquet, French State Secretary in charge of Indochina affairs, is due here in a week. Vietnamese feeling toward France has very greatly improved in past three years, and especially in past three months, but there is too deep a memory of colonial inferiority which has not yet been eradicated but which will, I hope, be alleviated by forthcoming negotiations in Paris. Quite some time ago Auriol told Bao Dai he wished to visit Vietnam. Bao Dai told me that he had discouraged him very definitely. In this situation celebration of Vice President's visit to Saigon had largely to be confined to official receptions and ceremonies.

In north, however, due to natural tendency of Governor Tri and a better security situation in Hanoi and in districts visited, reception took on a more popular character. In the field the Vice President moved in free and friendly fashion among troops. On an afternoon visit to Sontay Province, the school children, a youth organization, and their elders, the latter spontaneously, lined the street and cheered the US and its representative. In hospital visits in Hanoi and also in Saigon Mrs. Nixon talked with the sick, the wounded, and the children.

One incident which pleased me was his taking time in his tremendously crowded program to gather together personnel of this Embassy to thank them for their extra work in preparing the visit and to assure them of the continuing appreciation and solicitude of the administration for their welfare; and to tell them not to mind isolated attacks in Congress and elsewhere since knocks, not boosts, made news.

HEATH

033.1100 NI/11–853 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 8, 1953—4 p. m.

815. Repeated information Paris 237, Taipei 11. Codel–Nixon. Bao Dai told Bonsal[1] and me yesterday he was extremely glad, for various reasons, that Vice President had visited Vietnam. Vice President made an excellent impression. Greatest usefulness of visit from the particular viewpoint of Bao Dai was that in this moment of Vietnamese and French tension, Vice President had "opened the eyes" of Vietnamese to fact that without aid from, and association with France, Communists would win war.

Bao Dai went on to say he had received leaders and representatives of a number of political and religious groups and he invariably opened conversation with the question "Do you think you can beat Communists without any outside aid?", thereupon adding, "If you do, I will be glad to be your interpreter to the French and ask them to withdraw their troops."

Bao Dai said that without exception his callers had protested French military assistance must remain until victory was achieved. Bao Dai remarked that he was going to promote realistic understanding of situation. It was not important to gain any further concession from France at this time. After all, main thing was to maintain French military presence until victory had been gained. Thereafter, Vietnamese aspirations for independence and for concessions from France could easily be obtained.

HEATH

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[1] Philip W. Bonsal, Director of PSA, served on the U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, Nov. 6–15, 1953, headed by Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, Commander, U.S. Army, Pacific. Bonsal's observations based on his participation in the mission are set forth in his memorandum of Dec. 8, p. 903. For a summary of the major findings of General O'Daniel, see telegram RJ 68496 from O'Daniel to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Nov. 19, p. 879.

751G.00/11–953 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, November 9, 1953—10 a. m.

278. Repeated information Saigon 207, Paris 128. In briefing given yesterday to General O'Daniel, General Cogny said that in recently completed operation Mouette 1,141 Viet-Minh dead were counted on battlefield. On basis intelligence and questioning of prisoners, Cogny estimates that additional casualties inflicted by air bombing and artillery plus prisoners taken bring grand total division 320 losses in operation to about 4,500 or more than one-third its effectives.

At briefing given Vice President Nixon November 4, Field Commander of operation estimated Viet-Minh division's losses more conservatively at "not less than 20 percent."

Cogny's Chief of Staff said yesterday in private conversation that while he believed division 320 had for the time being ceased to be an effective military force, there is no way of determining how long it will remain so. If trained reserves are available, as they may be, division might be restored to combat readiness in matter of few weeks.

Meanwhile, Cogny said he felt threat to south delta had been relieved for the present by damage inflicted on division 320 and by reason of fact division 304 has fallen back on Thanh-Hoa. Cogny suggested he would next be concerned with elite divisions 308 and 312 now sitting to northwest of delta and that his objective was to attack before they did.

Comment: While Mouette was useful, it was badly overplayed by press and in certain military circles. Thoughtful observers here see it one of a series of time-gaining manoeuvres designed to delay what is generally coming to be accepted as an inevitable major Viet-Minh effort against the delta and to blunt the force of that assault when it is launched.

STURM

751H.00/11–1153 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 11, 1953—5 p. m.

831. Repeated information Paris unnumbered. I attended at Phnom Penh November 9, ceremony of transfer of French military powers to King of Cambodia [1] and review of departing French troops, regular ARK units and several of the new village and provincial troops mobilized by King during summer and autumn.

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[1] The transfer occurred pursuant to French–Cambodian accords of Nov. 8, 1953; for texts, see Royaume du Cambodge, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et des Conférences, *Accords, Protocoles, Conventions et Echanges de Lettres relatifs au transfert de toutes les compétences par le Gouvernement de la République Française au Gouvernement Royal du Cambodge* (Phnom Penh, Imprimerie Albert Portail, 1954), pp. 5–37.

Chargé Montllor will report in detail return of King to Phnom Penh and military transfer ceremony.[2] It is worth mentioning that transfer was graciously performed by French and General DeLanglade, speaking with obvious sincerity, paid tribute to soldierly qualities of Cambodian troops (but did not mention specifically Cambodian Officers Corps). In fact DeLanglade believes that some 20,000 to 30,000 of new village units could have their training completed and be used very effectively against Viet Minh in northern Vietnam. Catch would be whether Cambodian King would allow Cambodian troops to be used in fighting in what his proclamation of two months ago declared was a strictly Vietnamese war. I understand that DeLanglade broached this possibility to King who did not turn it down, and when asked about justifying to his people despatch of Cambodian troops to fight in Vietnam, King replied laughingly that he would describe it to them as necessary to a policy of "Pan-Khmerism."

After transfer ceremonies, awards of decorations and parading of regular French and Khmer units, village defense units from provinces around Phnom Penh marched in review for nearly four hours when King finally called halt, although there were still between 10,000 and 20,000 villagers who had not paraded, and who would have taken three hours more to pass the reviewing stand.

The village troops paraded without their wooden rifles and only arms were some antique swords carried by officers and non-coms. As a general rule, they marched well with visible spirit and pride. It was evident that properly led, indoctrinated, equipped, and logistically supported they would make good soldiers. The problem, of course, of finding Cambodian officers above company level could not be solved for many months to come.

They would have to have French field officers. DeLanglade told me he would not have believed it possible for King and his government to have persuaded Cambodian peasants to take military training. It is a tribute to King's personal authority over masses and obedience of latter. General Navarre said to me this morning that one must give credit to King for having created a national spirit and movement by his village mobilization measures.

HEATH

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[2] The ceremonies and the negotiations which culminated in the French-Cambodian accords were described by Chargé Joseph J. Montllor in despatch 40 from Phnom Penh, Nov. 16, not printed. (751H.5/11-1653)

751G.13/11-1353 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 13, 1953—6 p. m.

845. Repeated information Paris 243, Hanoi unnumbered. De Jean told me yesterday he will go to Dalat November 14 to talk with Bao

Dai. From his last talk with His Majesty De Jean believes that Bao Dai intends to change Vietnamese Cabinet within next 15 days, although he admits possibility His Majesty may procrastinate, recalling that it took latter 3 months to decide to get rid of Prime Minister Huu.

De Jean said he did not intend, and indeed could not, intervene in question of formation of new government beyond stating to Bao Dai that in French opinion Tam should be offered an important post in whatever new government was formed, possibly post of Minister of Interior. Tam was an element of strength in Vietnamese political picture. He had been essentially correct in his relations with French and had chalked up a very good record as Prime Minister. Of course, if Tam refused to accept an important new appointment, he, De Jean, would not insist that further effort be made to keep him in government.

Having disclaimed any intention of intervening in formation of new government, De Jean then asked my opinion as to who might best preside [over] it, mentioning name of Tri. I said that at the present time I saw no possible successor of Tam, aside from Tri, capable of forming and conducting an effective government. De Jean observed that that was also his idea, although there would be opposition in Cochin China to giving the government to a northerner, but added that Cochin Chinese would have to overcome their anti-northern prejudices in present situation. I remarked that Ngo Dinh Diem enjoyed personal prestige but there was some doubt, in view of his personal intransigence, whether he could organize and lead a governmental team. De Jean said that opinion in Paris was that Diem would not be an effective Prime Minister and that Bao Dai had in effect told him same thing. As for Buu Loc, I remarked that he had not exactly shone in his handling of recent National Congress. De Jean said that Buu Loc was a very clever man as shown by his speeches and statements, but that he was out of touch with internal political scene and it was too early to consider him as a chief of government. In any case Buu Loc had a very important job to fulfill in Paris in appeasing official and public opinion aroused by unfortunate resolutions of recent National Congress.

HEATH

751G.00/11–1353 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (*Dillon*) *to the Department of State*

CONFIDENTIAL PRIORITY PARIS, November 13, 1953—8 p. m.

1900. Repeated information Saigon 187. Early this morning government scored its second parliament [*parliamentary*] victory re IC within month, when Council Republic passed government-accepted resolution sponsored by RGR, independents, and peasants.[1] Summary follows:

> "It addresses homage of national recognition and its admiration to French Army and Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian contingents who defend in IC independence IC states and liberty its peoples.
>
> "And gives official notice to government its statements"

Resolution adopted innocuous and largely meaningless since it merely puts government on notice of views expressed in debate ranging from Communist and Socialist call for negotiations IC with Ho Chi Minh, to MRP and RPF demands for clarification governments IC and French Union policies. Priority consideration was given government-accepted resolution by vote 152 to 142, first paragraph of resolution thereafter being adopted by show hands (less Communists), and second paragraph by vote 160 to 99.

Debate was brief, uneventful, and anti-climactic in nature; questions posed, arguments advanced, and replies given representing largely repetition on reduced and less spectacular scale those expressed in recent Assembly debate IC, nor did debate exceed limits latter.

Debate was marked principally by Laniel's statement government's position IC, and is not considered represent any new departure IC policy present government. Laniel in uninspired but confident tones restated briefly theme expounded by him in speech Assembly October 27. Highlights his Council Republic speech follow:

Stated he had duty repeat in clear and categoric manner that French Government does not consider IC problem as necessarily calling for military solution. "No more than Americans in Korea, we will not demand unconditional surrender of adversary in order negotiate with him", and "if an honorable solution was in sight, within local or international framework, France, as United States in Korea, would be happy welcome a diplomatic solution conflict." Stated that no response had come from Ho since October 27 Assembly speech, and that it is necessary for those who desire immediate peace IC "to convince Ho"

Laniel pointed out, however, that will to seek peace ought not be misinterpreted, underlining oft-repeated theme government that to negotiate successfully, necessary to be strong. "More strength shown, better able increase chances diplomatic solution conflict". Hence, pleased receive additional aid from United States. Latter represents Anglo-Saxon comprehension significance IC war, and placement conflict in true light in sense common defense free world. Also, will for peace ought not be misinterpreted by Indochinese. "If government agrees one day to study a constructive proposition for a pacific settlement, it will do it only with participation Associated States".

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[1] For the record of the discussion on Indochina which occurred in the Council of the Republic on the night of Nov. 12–13, including a statement by Premier Laniel, see France, *Journal Officiel, Conseil de la République, 1953, Débats*, pp. 1739–1767.

Stated Saigon Congress incident in process settlement, and reiterated view that evolutionary process possible within present French constitutional provisions re French Union. However, echoing warning Associated States manifested Assembly debate, "if in months to come, Associated States do not throw all their strength in war which is more theirs today than ours; if they do not give proper inspiration (mystique) their troops; if they do not wish give financial support their armies, and if by an aberration, which I refuse to believe, secret intrigue, or public demagogery as they sterilize common defense effort, then France would consider itself freed its obligations and government would draw consequences and revise fundamentally its policy".

Laniel concluded by paying glowing tribute Indochinese soldiers, and by reiterating what he had said in Assembly October 27 debate (Embassy despatch 1272 November 9) [2] that "France is disposed to take any opportunity to negotiate, any opportunity to make peace, but if its hope is disappointed it will not fail in its duty".[3]

DILLON

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[2] Despatch 1272 from Paris, Nov. 9, transmitting information on the debate on Indochina in the National Assembly, is not printed. (751G.00/11-953)

[3] On the morning of Nov. 13, the statement by Premier Laniel was discussed in the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting. The summary of that discussion read as follows: "In a discussion concerning a statement by Laniel on French willingness to negotiations [*negotiate*] in Indo-China and not to press for an all-out victory, the Secretary stated that he did not feel too upset over this statement—that it was a matter of political reality in France that the French Government must say they were willing to negotiate. The Government recognized that it was not in a position to negotiate now but that no French Government could ask the French people to rule out an armistice in Indo-China while we had gone ahead with an armistice in Korea. The possibility of conflict over Laniel's statement with that the Vice President had made at Saigon was felt by the Secretary to be the work of enterprising reporters." (Secretary's Staff Meetings, lot 63 D 75)

The statement by Vice President Nixon to which Secretary Dulles referred was presumably that delivered in Hanoi on Nov. 4 at a dinner held by Commissioner General Dejean. That address by the Vice President had included the following remarks: "I realize that there has been talk of negotiation with the aggressors. We all want peace, but I think that we all realize too that the aggressors have not asked for peace, they have not asked to negotiate, and we all also realize that under no circumstances could negotiations take place which would in effect place people who want to be free and independent in perpetual bondage." The text of the speech was transmitted as enclosure 3 to despatch 195 from Saigon, Nov. 7. (033.1100 NI/11-753)

751H.13/11-1553: Telegram

The Chargé at Phnom Penh (Montllor) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PHNOM PENH, November 15, 1953—7 p. m.
PRIORITY

55. Sent Saigon 104, repeated information priority Department 55, priority Paris 45. King Sihanouk this afternoon withdrew as president Council Ministers and simultaneously dismissed entire Cabinet after he had received resignations from Prime Minister Penn Nouth, Min-

ister Defense Simvar, Minister Public Works Tioulong, Minister Education Samsary. Foreign Minister Sirik Matak's resignation had been pending since Prime Minister's neutralist declaration of September. King called together leaders of political parties and religious leaders for two hour conference this afternoon to tell them that he would soon appoint a new Cabinet charged with the responsibility of organizing elections for new National Assembly and return to constitutional government, such elections to take place within five months. While many political leaders would like to see King head new Cabinet, he had not made known his decision in this respect. Parties are being asked to submit candidates for new National Union Cabinet, and it is unlikely that the Cabinet will be formed in less than a week or ten days because of succession of holidays next week. In meantime outgoing Cabinet will remain at posts.

Official explanation for mass resignations is that tasks of outgoing Cabinet ended with completion of military negotiations with France. Immediate cause of Penn Nouth resignation was resentment at King's strong criticism of lengthy parade of volunteers November 9. But rivalries were also apparently building up in Cabinet as different blocs were readying for coming struggle for political ascendancy. Thus we are witnessing fulfillment of prediction that when King had finally settled differences with France he would face great internal problems.

MONTLLOR

INR–NIE files

Special Estimate [1]

TOP SECRET
SE 52

WASHINGTON, 16 November 1953.

PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES IN NON-COMMUNIST ASIA* OF CERTAIN POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA BEFORE MID-1954 [2]

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable reactions and consequences in non-Communist Asia of:

(*a*) the establishment of effective Viet Minh control over Indochina before mid-1954, or; the attainment by the Viet Minh before

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[1] Special Estimates (SE's), after 1953 known as Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE's), were high-level interdepartmental reports presenting authoritative appraisals of vital foreign policy problems on an immediate or crisis basis. For information on National Intelligence Estimates (NIE's), a closely related category of reports, see footnote 1, p. 53.

*Non-Communist Asia, as here used, includes Japan, the ROK, Nationalist China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, Thailand, the Associated States of Indochina, Burma, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon. [Footnote in the source text.]

[2] According to a note on the cover sheet, "The Intelligence Advisory Committee

Footnote continued on next page.

mid-1954, of a degree of success which rendered the French Union position in Indochina untenable;

(*b*) the intervention, before mid-1954, of US ground, naval, and air forces in order to prevent the fall of Indochina to Communist control.

ASSUMPTIONS†

For (*a*) above:

1. No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.
2. No US combat units had been committed.

For (*b*) above:

1. No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.
2. French Union forces still retained a foothold in Indochina.

CONCLUSIONS

Probable Consequences of a Viet Minh Victory in Indochina

1. A Viet Minh victory in Indochina would remove a significant military barrier to a Communist sweep through Southeast Asia, expose the remainder of that region to greatly increased external Communist pressures, and probably increase the capabilities of local Communists. There would probably be little initiative on the part of the governments of the area toward collective defense.‡

2. Most Asian leaders would regard a Viet Minh victory in Indochina as a defeat for the West and a major blow to US power and prestige in Asia. The policies adopted by the non-Communist governments to meet the new power situation in Southeast Asia would be

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Footnote continued from preceding page.

concurred in this estimate on 10 November 1953. The FBI abstained, the subject being outside of its jurisdiction. The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff."

†The questions of probable Chinese Communist courses of action with respect to Indochina and of Communist reactions to a US intervention in Indochina are not within the scope of this estimate, and will be covered in NIE–98. [Footnote in the source text. NIE 98 has not been identified, but see SE 53, "Probable Communist Reactions to Certain Possible US Courses of Action in Indochina through 1954," Dec. 18, p. 924.]

‡The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that this paragraph should read as follows:

"The establishment of Communist control over Indochina by military or other means would almost certainly result in the communization of all of Southeast Asia and the exposure of India, the Philippines and Australia to increasing Communist pressure. Communization of Southeast Asia would, in effect, transfer the rice surpluses, the oil, tin, and rubber, now largely available to the West, to the Communists and would facilitate their interruption of communication lines. The loss of the rice surpluses would weaken the bargaining power of the West with the rice-deficient countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan, while strengthening that of the Communist Bloc." [Footnote in the source text.]

largely determined by the psychological impact of the Western defeat, and by a number of contingent developments such as the subsequent policies and actions of the US, Communist China, and the new Indochina.

3. Thailand would be most directly affected by the Viet Minh victory. Unless the US were able to give Thailand a specific security guarantee and to convince the Thai Government that it could safely continue to entrust Thailand's security to the West, Thailand would almost certainly begin to reorient its position toward the Communist bloc.

4. The governments of India, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Ceylon would probably not appreciably change their present policies toward the Communist bloc in the absence of further Communist aggression in the area and so long as Thailand retained essentially its present orientation. However, Thai accommodation to Communism would probably impel Burma, and possibly Indonesia, to abandon their neutral positions in favor of an alignment with one or the other of the power blocs. If Burma should clearly reorient itself to the Communist bloc, India would be forced to reassess its non-alignment policy and the chances are slightly better than even that in this circumstance India would seek quietly to move closer to the Western democracies; Pakistan would probably continue its present pro-US policy, particularly if the US were prepared to give substantial military and economic support.

5. Nationalist China, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Japan, and the British in Malaya would probably continue essentially their present policies.

Probable Consequences of a US Intervention in Force in Indochina

6.§ Nationalist China, the Republic of Korea, and the Philippines would tend to welcome a forceful US intervention in Indochina; Japan and the UK would at least acquiesce. These countries could be expected to give diplomatic support and might provide varying degrees of material assistance. The Pakistan Government would probably adopt a policy of benevolent neutrality toward the US action.

7. The non-Communist Indochinese leaders would support US intervention if they believed that such US action would soon bring the

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§The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that paragraph 6 should be preceded by the following additional paragraph:

"U.S. intervention in force in Indochina would effectively stop further Communist advance in Southeast Asia, reduce their capabilities in Indonesia, and provide a bulwark to the Philippines and Australia; this would assure the availability of rice to the non-Communist rice-deficient nations and guarantee to the West the continuing availability of the vital strategic raw materials of Southeast Asia and its contiguous areas." [Footnote in the source text.]

Indochina war to a close and would insure the independence of the Associated States.

8. Thailand, initially at least, would probably attempt to avoid involvement in the conflict. However, if Thailand obtained satisfactory guarantees from the US, it would probably permit the US to use Thai territory and facilities.

9. India, Burma, Indonesia, and Ceylon would disapprove interference in what they still tend to regard as a French struggle against an Asian nationalist movement, and, at least initially, would be fearful of an extension of war in Asia. India would denounce the US action and would probably seek a solution of the Indochina problem in the UN; the other neutralist countries would probably seek to avoid any involvement.

10. Over the longer run, reactions in non-Communist Asia would be largely determined by the success of the US intervention. If the Viet Minh were quickly defeated without leading to a Chinese Communist invasion of Indochina, and if truly independent and effective governments emerged in Indochina, non-Communist Asian leaders would accept the new situation and would welcome the setback of Communist expansion in Asia. On the other hand, a protracted stalemate in Indochina would almost certainly reduce support for the US throughout Asia.

DISCUSSION

Present Attitudes in the Non-Communist Asian Countries Toward the War in Indochina

11. Throughout non-Communist Asia, consciousness of the full implications of the Indochina war as of other international issues is largely restricted to government officials, military leaders, journalists, students, and professionals. The nature and intensity of the attitudes of this policy-determining elite toward developments in Indochina vary widely and are determined largely by the degree to which appreciation of Communist objectives and policies in Asia modifies the nationalist and often anti-Western attitudes held by this elite. At present, however, nationalist attitudes are generally dominant.

12. Present Asian nationalist and anti-Western attitudes are in large part a heritage of the struggle for independence from the colonial powers. Many Asian leaders, particularly in India, Burma, and Indonesia, view Western objectives in Asia with strong suspicion and regard the Indochina war primarily as a struggle between indigenous nationalism and French colonialism.

13. Their past experiences with colonial rule and their present real or imagined grievances against the West tend to blind many Asians to the threat of international Communism and to the close relationship between the Viet Minh and the international Communist movement. Although most non-Communist Asian leaders recognize the internal Communist threat in their own countries and generally acknowledge that the Communist bloc supports the Viet Minh, many believe that the Indochinese nationalists turned to the Communists for assistance only because of French intransigeance, and some hold that these nationalists would rid themselves of their Communist colleagues once the French had withdrawn from Indochina. Some non-Communist Asian leaders even believe that their countries should accommodate to Communism.

14. The strongly anti-Communist governments of Korea, Japan, Nationalist China, and the Philippines, which rely on US power for their security, probably find US support for the French and Associated States a reassuring indication of US determination to resist Communist expansion. However, many Asian leaders, particularly in India, Burma, and Indonesia, are critical of US policy toward Indochina. They are convinced that the war has been prolonged by US assistance and that US "intervention" in what they consider to be a war for independence has further embroiled Asia in the struggle between the Western Powers and the Communist bloc. They also fear that US policies will lead to expansion of the area of conflict in Asia.

15. Nevertheless, there is a growing though still inadequate recognition among leaders in South and Southeast Asia of the expansionist nature of Communist objectives and policies in Asia. In addition, there is increased apprehension throughout non-Communist Asia concerning the aims of Communist China, not so much because it is Communist as because Asians fear the expansion of Chinese power.

Probable Consequences of a Viet Minh Victory in Indochina

(Assumptions:

(1) No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.

(2) No US combat units had been committed.)

16. A Viet Minh victory in Indochina would remove a significant military barrier to a Communist sweep through Southeast Asia and would expose the remainder of Southeast Asia to greatly increased external Communist pressures. There would be no indigenous military force in the area capable of performing the current protective role of the Franco-Vietnamese forces in Indochina, and there would

probably be little initiative on the part of the governments of the area toward collective defense.‖

17. Most Asian leaders would regard a Viet Minh victory in Indochina as a defeat for the West and a major blow to US power and prestige in Asia. The policies adopted by the non-Communist governments to meet the new power situation in Southeast Asia would be largely determined by the psychological impact of the Western defeat and by a number of contingent developments, the most important of which we believe would be: (*a*) the apparent success with which the Viet Minh established and maintained effective control over Indochina, and the apparent degree to which the new Indochina was dominated by Communist leaders; (*b*) the degree to which the new Indochina appeared to become a satellite of Communist China; (*c*) the degree to which Communist China and the new Indochina pursued either aggressive or "peaceful" policies toward their non-Communist neighbors; (*d*) the activities of the indigenous Communist movements within the various non-Communist countries; and (*e*) the policies and actions of the US in Asia.

18. Despite the numerous variables involved, we estimate that the following reactions and consequences are likely to result from a Viet Minh victory in Indochina.

19. Thailand would be most directly affected by the Viet Minh victory. The Thai Government's concern for the security of the country would immediately increase, and the government would almost certainly seek a specific guarantee that the US would protect Thai independence. Unless the US were able to give these guarantees and to convince the Thai Government that it could safely continue to entrust Thailand's security to the West, Thailand would almost certainly begin to reorient its position toward the Communist bloc.

20. The governments of India, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Ceylon, while probably increasingly aware of the Communist nature of the Viet Minh and of its relationship to Asian Communist power, would probably be slow to recognize the seriousness of the threat to their security posed by the new power situation in Southeast Asia. In the absence of further Communist aggression in the area and so long

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‖The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes this paragraph should read as follows:

"The establishment of Communist control over Indochina by military or other means would almost certainly result in the communization of all of Southeast Asia and the exposure of India, the Philippines and Australia to increasing Communist pressure. Communization of Southeast Asia would, in effect, transfer the rice surpluses, the oil, tin and rubber, now largely available to the West, to the Communists and would facilitate their interruption of communication lines. The loss of the rice surpluses would weaken the bargaining power of the West with the rice-deficient countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan, while strengthening that of the Communist Bloc." [Footnote in the source text.]

as Thailand retained essentially its present orientation, these governments would probably not appreciably change their present policies toward the Communist bloc. However, Thai accommodation to the Communist bloc would probably impel Burma, and possibly Indonesia, to abandon their neutral positions in favor of an alignment with one or the other of the power blocs, but would probably have little effect on the policies of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon towards Communism. If, however, Burma should clearly reorient itself to the Communist bloc, India would be forced to reassess its non-alignment policy and the chances are slightly better than even that in this circumstance India would seek quietly to move closer to the Western democracies. Ceylon would probably seek economic guarantees from the US and show interest in defense arrangements with the West. Pakistan would probably continue its present pro-US policy, particularly if the US were prepared to give substantial military and economic support.

21. In the event of a Viet Minh victory in Indochina, the governments of Nationalist China, the ROK, and the Philippines would almost certainly continue to pursue strongly anti-Communist domestic and foreign policies. The British in Malaya would continue to resist to the limit of their capabilities the increased Communist pressures which would probably accompany the extension of Communist power in Southeast Asia. However, the premised situation would facilitate an increase in Communist effectiveness, thus requiring an increase in British forces to counter it.

22. Japan would retain its pro-Western orientation but would insist that the US fully guarantee its security and economic viability. However, Japan would probably attempt to expand economic and political relations with the Communist states in Asia, as far as this could be done without jeopardizing its relations with the US.

23. Most non-Communist Asian governments would become more apprehensive over the activities of local Communists and might initiate more stringent measures against them. Although local Communist movements in Asia outside Indochina are not now capable of overthrowing existing governments, a Viet Minh victory would probably increase the capabilities of local Communists, particularly in Southeast Asia. If the local Communists should intensify their efforts in support of stepped-up political and economic pressures from the Communist bloc, the awareness of the Communist threat would increase in Asia. However, in the short run local Communist action would be likely to have less effect upon the policies of the governments of non-Communist Asia toward international Communism than would external Communist pressures and each government's assessment of the new power balance in Asia.

Probable Consequences of a US Intervention in Force in Indochina

(Assumptions:

(1) No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.

(2) French Union forces still retained a foothold in Indochina.)

24.¶ Initial reactions to US intervention would vary among the non-Communist Asian countries and within each country, depending upon such factors as: (*a*) each government's estimate of the likelihood that the US action would lead to Chinese Communist intervention in force in Indochina; (*b*) the policies and tactics of Communist China with respect to Korea and other Asian issues; (*c*) the circumstances of the US intervention, in particular the attitudes of the leaders of the Associated States toward the intervention and the state of political relations between France and the Associated States; (*d*) the position of the UN with respect to the US action; and (*e*) the extent to which non-Communist Asian leaders estimated that the US intervention was of a scale and nature sufficient to defeat the field forces of the Viet Minh.

25. The Asian nations with a strong anti-Communist orientation would tend to welcome, or at least acquiesce in, a forceful US intervention in Indochina, viewing such action as evidence of US determination to prevent further Communist expansion. These countries could be expected to give diplomatic support and might provide varying degrees of material assistance. On the other hand, the "neutralist" countries would, at least initially, view US intervention with apprehension induced by overriding fears of extension of war in Asia. These countries would also disapprove interference in what they still tend to regard as a French struggle against an Asian nationalist movement, although this disapproval might be modified by some feeling of reassurance over the exercise of US power.

26. The government of Nationalist China would welcome US intervention in Indochina but would be concerned that US aid would be diverted from Taiwan. The Nationalist Government would probably welcome the threat of Communist Chinese intervention in force in Indochina in hope that, should it occur, it would involve the US in war with Communist China. The Nationalist Government would probably not offer forces for service in Indochina.

¶The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that this paragraph should be preceded by the following additional paragraph:

"U.S. intervention in force in Indochina would effectively stop further Communist advance in Southeast Asia, reduce their capabilities in Indonesia, and provide a bulwark to the Philippines and Australia; this would assure the availability of rice to the non-Communist rice-deficient nations and guarantee to the West the continuing availability of the vital strategic raw materials of Southeast Asia and its contiguous areas." [Footnote in the source text.]

27. The Philippine Government would welcome the intervention and would probably permit the US to use Philippine territory and facilities. In addition, the Philippine Government might offer token forces. The threat of a Chinese Communist invasion in Indochina would probably not dissuade the Philippine Government from supporting the US action.

28. The non-Communist Indochinese leaders would support US intervention if they believed that such US action would soon bring the Indochina war to a close and would insure the independence of the Associated States. A threatened Chinese Communist invasion would probably appreciably lessen this support, unless the scale and nature of the US intervention appeared to Indochinese leaders to be adequate to deter or to defeat such invasion.

29. UK and some British Commonwealth forces are presently engaged in Malaya. The UK, although apprehensive of the possibility of war between Communist China and the West, would probably approve a US intervention in Indochina as necessary for the defense of Malaya and for the prevention of further expansion of Communist power in Asia. Australia and New Zealand would clearly recognize the threat of expanding Communism in Southeast Asia and would give full support to the US action. These three Commonwealth countries might be able to provide token naval and air support. However, none of these countries would be capable of providing ground forces at present unless units now in Korea were diverted for service in Indochina.

30. ROK leaders would be apprehensive that the US intervention in Indochina would divert US military support from the ROK, but would favor the intervention if they thought that it would involve the US in a war with Communist China and thus improve the chances for the unification of Korea under the ROK.

31. The Indian Government would probably denounce the US intervention on the grounds that it was undertaken to suppress a nationalist struggle against colonialism and that this US action would greatly increase the chances of extending the area of conflict in Asia. India would probably seek a solution of the Indochina problem in the UN.

32. The Burmese would be apprehensive that US intervention would provoke Chinese Communist intervention in force in Indochina which might involve Burma in war. The Burmese Government would probably attempt to maintain a neutral attitude towards the US intervention. However, if India initiated UN action, Burma might support it.

33. The Indonesian Government would be critical of US intervention, but would probably seek to avoid any involvement in the Indo-

china problem. Ceylon would be unlikely to take any official position.

34. The Japanese Government would probably lend diplomatic support, but without enthusiasm. The government would fear that the US action might lead to the diversion of US armed forces and material aid from Japan and might even involve Japan in war.

35. The Thai Government's reaction would depend almost entirely on its estimate of the effect of US intervention in Indochina on Thailand's own security. Thailand, initially at least, would probably attempt to avoid involvement in the conflict. However, if Thailand obtained satisfactory security guarantees from the US, it would probably permit the US to use Thai territory and facilities.

36. The Pakistan Government would probably adopt a policy of benevolent neutrality toward the US action, although some public opinion would probably be critical of US intervention because of nationalist feeling and because of the fear of expanded war in Asia. The Pakistan Government would probably not support any UN action condemning US intervention.

37. Over the longer run, reactions in non-Communist Asia to US intervention in force in Indochina would be largely determined by the success of the intervention. If the Viet Minh were quickly eliminated or decisively defeated without leading to a Chinese Communist invasion of Indochina, and if military victory were followed by the emergence of truly independent and effective governments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, non-Communist Asian leaders would accept the new situation and would welcome the setback of Communist expansion in Asia. On the other hand, a protracted stalemate in Indochina would almost certainly reduce support for the US throughout Asia.

751.5622/11–1853

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to the Under Secretary of State (Smith)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] November 18, 1953.

Subject: French request for C–47 aircraft in Indochina.

I understand that Ambassador Bonnet discussed the matter of obtaining 25 additional C–47 aircraft in Indochina with you this morning,[2] although we had been informed beforehand that he would raise

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[1] Drafted by Edgar J. Beigel of WE.

[2] The memorandum by McBride (WE) of the Smith-Bonnet conversation read as follows with regard to discussion of the question of additional aircraft for Indochina:

"Ambassador Bonnet stated that he wished first to mention the request of General Navarre for 25 additional C–47 transport aircraft in Indochina. He indicated that Navarre had 75 of these planes but needed the additional 25 in order to increase the size of possible parachute drops. He said the French forces had ten or a different question. The French request for additional transport aircraft for Indochina has been under discussion for some time, the French having formally stated their need for such aircraft in their memorandum to us on September 1, dealing with over-all French plans in Indochina.[3]

General Trapnell, chief of MAAG in Indochina, had taken the position that the French did not have adequate air and ground crews in Indochina to handle effectively such additional aircraft. Recently, however, he withdrew his objections on the basis of over-riding political considerations (see attached telegram).[4] General Navarre also discussed this problem with the Vice President during his recent visit to Indochina, and the latter subsequently sent a telegram to Navarre saying that he would pass on the French request to the President with a recommendation that we provide the additional aircraft.[5]

Consideration has been given within the Department that, if the President agrees, and if the aircraft are available, we might inform the French during the Bermuda meetings[6] that we are prepared to provide the aircraft provided the French have adequate crews to handle them. This matter was brought to the President's attention in the course of a meeting at the White House yesterday, which the Secretary, Mr. Nash, Mr. MacArthur and I attended.[7] The President was sympathetic to the French request, and Mr. Nash indicated that we might provide the aircraft on condition the French increase their air and ground crews in Indochina sufficiently to handle effectively these aircraft, as well as the some 40 C–47 aircraft already there. You will recall that Ambassador Bonnet said this morning that the French had recently increased their ground crew strength in Indochina.

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twelve battalions of paratroopers and wanted to have the utmost possible mobility in any operation. He added those planes should be sent in well ahead of any scheduled major operation and not just on the eve of a drop when they would compromise operational secrecy.

"The Under Secretary indicated he thought these planes might well be obtained and that he felt sure we would make them available to the French if we could locate them. Ambassador Bonnet added that the French situation insofar as crews to provide maintenance for their planes was much better now than it had been some months ago when this was a serious problem." (751G.5 MSP/11–1853)

[3] For text, see p. 770.

[4] The attached telegram, 846 from Saigon, Nov. 13, is not printed.

[5] The message of the Vice President to General Navarre is contained in telegram 873 from Hong Kong, Nov. 5, p. 856.

[6] Reference is to the scheduled meeting of the Heads of Government of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. President Eisenhower, Prime Minister Churchill, and Premier Laniel met at Bermuda, Dec. 4–7. Indochina was discussed at the 5th plenary session, Dec. 7; for an account of that discussion, see extract from telegram Secto 24, Dec. 7, p. 901.

[7] No record of the meeting under reference has been found in Department of State files.

We hope that the O'Daniel survey group, which is scheduled to return to Washington this weekend, will have the complete picture on the aircraft as well as air personnel situation in Indochina. Taking into account their report, we can determine definitely how to respond to the French request and whether the timing will make it feasible for the President to give the French our reply during the Bermuda meetings.[3]

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[3] The following handwritten notation by Merchant, dated Nov. 19, appears on the source text: "The General instructed me to push ahead on this and not hold back for Bermuda. If we need backing we should call on him."

751G.00/11-1953 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 19, 1953—2 p. m.

879. Repeated information Paris 252, Hanoi unnumbered. I accompanied Senator Smith (N.J.)[1] and Dr. Francis Wilcox[2] on call on General Navarre who explained "Navarre plan" while deprecating having his name attached to it. Navarre stated that circumstances would require him to wage an essentially defensive war in north until summer 1954, but this would not preclude French tactical offensives in that region or clean-up of Tonkin delta. Meanwhile, as Vietnamese Army built up, he planned offensive operations to destroy Viet Minh Forces in south and central Vietnam. This should be accomplished by next June by which time, as a result of expansion of his own forces, of military and economic losses and difficulties which would be inflicted on Viet Minh, by using some of new Vietnamese National Army units and freeing certain French Union units from their present state of warfare duties, he would have a sufficient striking force to force main Viet Minh Armies in north to decisive battles. He hoped that by April 1, 1955 or certainly by May, or June, to have inflicted military defeat on Viet Minh. This did not mean that hostilities would then be entirely over since there were vast regions of forests, jungle, and mountains from which Viet Minh could still indulge in guerrilla harassment. It might take another two years or so to wipe out such last-stand guerrilla operations but that campaign would be essentially a police rather than military operation and Vietnam would have forces to cope with it alone.

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[1] Senator H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited Indochina from Nov. 14–20.

[2] Chief of Staff, Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Navarre believed there was no Chinese intention at present to intervene as a belligerent. There would be danger of such intervention later when Viet Minh began to suffer serious reverses. In this respect there is perhaps a distinction to be drawn between Korea and Vietnam. If Chinese Communists had not entered war when MacArthur's[3] troops stood at Yalu, all north Korea would have been lost in few days to communism. Defeat of Viet Minh would not come about in one dramatic military movement which might provoke Chinese intervention but would come about more gradually. He felt Chinese would not want intervene since they must have some fear of ultimate consequences of such action.

In reply to Senator Smith's question Navarre said that American aid now programmed should be sufficient successfully to accomplish his plan. He had two worries. One was that prior to his arrival French had agreed to give a degree of autonomy to Vietnamese National Army which interfered with successful unified command. He had operational command over Vietnamese Army but no direct powers over its formation, instruction and administration. He was about in same situation as General Gruenther in relations to Armies of Belgium, Holland and other European states. But General Gruenther was dealing with solid, adult armies. Navarre said he should have more direct authority over training and formation of cadres of Vietnamese Forces and in selection and promotion of officers. With respect to latter there was too much favoritism, family influence, and too much insistence that officers must hold "diplomas." It would be difficult to persuade Vietnam to relinquish any of its present degree of military autonomy but he thought it might be accomplished by "diplomacy."

Second problem was how to instill these troops with a really warlike spirit. He did not specify in this conversation just how this was to be achieved. In previous conversations he has deplored reclusive habits of Bao Dai and absence of really dynamic government.

HEATH

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[3] General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, Korea, July 1950–April 1951.

751G.00/11-1953 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, November 19, 1953—3 p. m.

880. Repeated information Paris 254, Hanoi unnumbered. I accompanied Senator Smith (N.J.) and Dr. F. Wilcox, Staff Chief of Senate Foreign Relations Committee on call on Bao Dai. Latter indicated

negotiations with French will not begin before next January certainly not until after French presidential election December 22. The rather harsh resolutions against joining French Union in present form passed by what Bao Dai termed "so-called national Congress" [garble] had produced tension in France and a certain "exaltation" in Vietnam which needed to be calmed down before negotiations began. All representative Vietnamese Nationalists, however, whom Bao Dai had seen since his return have expressed realistic understanding of need of continued French military and economic assistance to win war against Viet Minh and that French price would be membership in French Union. However, Bao Dai said, French must make some gesture, which he did not specify, which would make membership in French Union more palatable to Nationalists. Latter did not like adjective "French." If organization could be known simply as "the Union." The way British Commonwealth is frequently referred to as "the Commonwealth," it would tend to dispel Vietnamese Nationalists' objections to membership. Actually, Bao Dai indicated, Vietnamese Nationalists' reluctance to being members French Union was ridiculously lacking in realism and membership meant only attendance at an unimportant and brief annual meeting. Once war was successfully ended Vietnam would be free to take any line it wished in French Union.

Bao Dai expressed optimism as regards military operations here and spoke well of General Navarre. Bao Dai said he had not been alarmed by Laniel's recent declaration indicating possibility of French negotiations with Viet Minh.[1] He noted declaration did not invite Viet Minh to negotiate but was made to appease that portion of French opinion desiring early termination of war. Bao Dai did not believe that Viet Minh would suggest negotiations at this time. There was a danger, however, if French continued to harp publicly on negotiations, that some months later when blows of expanding Franco-Viet Forces began to hurt Viet Minh, latter might suddenly tell France to set forth idea of basis of such negotiations. Since France could not offer acceptable terms to Viet Minh, latter would gain propaganda advantage for a decision to continue fight.

Bao Dai did not believe that Communist China planned to become a belligerent in war in near future but admitted such danger would exist when Viet Minh began to suffer significant reverses. In conclusion Bao Dai expressed thanks for American aid, saying that without it war would already have been lost.

HEATH

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[1] The reference is presumably to the statement made by Premier Laniel before the Council of the Republic on Nov. 12, which is described in telegram 1900 from Paris, Nov. 13, p. 862.

751G.5/11-1953 : Telegram

The Commanding General, United States Army, Pacific (O'Daniel) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff[1]

TOP SECRET FORT SHAFTER, HAWAII, November 19, 1953.

RJ 68496. Purpose this msg to summarize major findings my mis Indochina 6 Nov to 15 Nov.[2]

Navarre concept as described to me last June in form finally approved by French Govt and included in United States-French exchange of notes is being generally applied to current operations and planning. So far Navarre has regained initiative lost last year and is continuing operations to maintain it. One of 5 enemy div available for offensive against delta rept to have lost ⅓ effectives as result French offensive south of delta (Operation Mouette) while large part effectives another div has been diverted to meet French Union operations including guerrilla, commandos and Maquis in Thai country. Enemy offensive potential however remains. Gen Navarre anticipates that enemy will in all probability attack. French state they would welcome an attack. Believe such an attack would be disastrous to enemy.

Navarre has made progress in building up cmbt res. He now has 13 groupes mobiles (each groupe mobile consists of 3 inf bn and 1 arty bn) compared with only 6 groupes mobiles last summer. By Jan there will be 16 groupes mobiles and this will be increased to 20 next summer.

The equivalent of 3 regt have arrived or will arrive soon from France and Korea. They have been or will be sta respectively in Tonkin, cen Annam and the south where they form basis 3 new groupes mobiles which will be used in early contemplated offensive operations.

Gen Navarre has 3 light div operational consisting of 3 groupes mobiles, each with divisional arty and eng units. (These 9 groupes mobiles are included in the 13 cited above). In addition he has grouped his 6 paratroop bns and other elements into an air command. He is convinced of value of divisional concept and intends continue along this line.

Navarre and I discussed possibility increasing effort to eliminate infiltration Tonkin delta. He stated that he had considered it but his surv disclosed that more troops and mat would be needed than he now has available and at same time carry out his offensive plans. *Comment:* With forces currently available Navarres reasoning appears sound.

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[1] This telegram specified that copies be transmitted for information to MAAG Saigon, MAAG Paris, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, CINCPAC (Pearl Harbor), the Department of State, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Ambassadors at Saigon and Paris.

[2] A copy of the full report of the mission to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Progress Report on Military Situation in Indochina as of 19 November 1953," is in file 711.5851G/11-1953. A memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, Dec. 31, 1953, transmitting a summary of the report, is in JCS Records, CCS .092 Asia (6-25-48), sec. 51.

Navarre plan for conduct of war involves (*a*) final clearing operation in south against 5 or 6 enemy regular bns to begin Jan; (*b*) similar clearing operation against 15 to 16 regular enemy bns in cen Annam to begin about Jan 15 and continue through Aug; (*c*) simultaneously vigorous action inside and outside Tonkin delta with existing forces designed throw enemy off balance and prevent development enemy offensive capabilities between now and end current dry season (no further reinforcements contemplated for Tonkin delta this period); (*d*) final offensive in Tonkin delta with battle corps reinforced with elements recovered other areas to begin 1 Oct 1954. Navarre was much concerned ref security and hoped we would appreciate his concern.

Navarres principal current problem has to do with recruiting, tng and use of Vietnamese Army. He believes recent experience shows Vietnamese command has been given too much autonomy too soon and that certain units, notably light bns in Buichu area, had been used for missions for which they were not prepared. Believe this impression shared by Bao Dai, Gen Hinh, Def Minister Quat, and Gov Tri, with result solution which will (*a*) strengthen Navarre's control over operations Vietnamese Army and (*b*) restore Navarre's control over tng activities of Vietnamese Army. Situation which has developed due partly to tech mil factors and partly to political factors. This problem not insoluble as evidenced by fact older regular Vietnamese units have proved themselves thoroughly cmbt-worthy. Navarre convinced progress this direction vital to success entire effort.

As result my conversation with Gen Navarre and others, have secured agreement to immediate assignment of 2 American Army officers to newly constituted French tng command for ground for. Have also secured agreement to early consideration of dispatch ln officers from United States Navy (including Marine) and AF for same purpose. Matter is being submitted to Paris.

With regard cmbt intel matter, Gen Navarre has submitted to Paris plan involving assignment this team as part mil attachés office Saigon with auth to send 1 officer when desired to Hanoi. This concept appears to me satisfactory in the sense it will get us what we want.

I found Gen Navarre, for both political and mil reasons, sensitive to establishment of ln between French and United States mil except through existing MAAG and service attaché channels. Agree with this concept in view nature sensitivities and political factors especially in France.

Navarre also spoke concerning his urgent need for certain types of equipment. On my return to Wash DC 23 Nov will rept fully details these requests. In my judgment, we should fully support Gen Navarre, in whose success we have such large stake.

751G.00/11-2153: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, November 21, 1953—4 p. m.

897. Repeated information Paris 258, Hanoi unnumbered. General Navarre told me last night he was much encouraged over success of three-battalion parachute drop in Dien Bien Phu. He had absolute intelligence that Viet Minh planned to take Lai Chau. He must resist this not because of importance in itself of Lai Chau but because it was necessary case for expanding guerrilla operations which were harassing Viet Minh rear with increasing success. He could not defend Lai Chau itself by increasing garrison because by reason of its cuplike situation he would need 12 battalions to hold it. His battalions at Dien Bien Phu aided by guerrillas, should be able to thwart Viet Minh operations against Lai Chau.

Navarre told me that he had hesitated to make Dien Bien Phu parachute operation since with limited number of transport planes he could only drop two battalions at a time in an area where they would be opposed by two Viet Minh battalions. Fortunately latter had not reacted promptly and he had sent planes back for additional battalion. He had had some 40 casualties but Viet Minh had had double that number.

Navarre went on to say that it is utterly necessary that he be given an extra squadron of C–47's. They are only planes suitable for use in this area. As a very bad second best he could have C–119 flown over from Manila but there would be delay and no possibility of surprise. Landing of C–119's in Cat Bi would immediately tip off enemy. Furthermore, he would fly C–47's with a single pilot whereas flying boxcars required co-pilots.

HEATH

751G.00/11-2353: Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, November 23, 1953—6 p. m.

310. Repeated information Saigon 229, Paris 142. Spokesman for General Cogny today gave following information on operation CASTOR (BEAVER):

Five battalions parachuted into Dien-Bien-Phu and environs November 20 and 21. Second wave of parachutists, dropped on town itself, met with some opposition. Viet Minh casualties to date are 92 killed and 15 prisoners; French Union casualties described as 12 wounded.

Purpose of operation is to establish base in Thai country.

(1) To serve as northern anchor of Laos defenses, southern anchor being Plaine des Jarres;
(2) To send out scout in hand attack parties in all directions to seek out enemy and engage him;
(3) To foster development of Thai guerrilla and partisan forces to supplement those already formed and based on Lai Chau.

Viet Minh division 316, which has for some time had elements deployed from Thanh-Hoa base toward Thai country, has not offered special threat recently, but High Command feared that it might be acting as precursor of other major Viet Minh elements for eventual attack on Laos.

Spokesman insisted that there is no intent establish a new Nasan at Dien-Bien-Phu, but only a base for positive and offensive operations. Forces will be maintained there only as long as proves expeditious.

Units based on Lai Chau have descended mountain trail leading due south from Lai Chau to Dien-Bien-Phu to make contact with parachute battalions. Informant said this trail is now in French Union hands over its full length.

STURM

751G.5822/11-2353

Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Bonbright)

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] November 23, 1953.

Admiral Radford telephoned this afternoon concerning the French request for 25 additional C-47's for Indo-China. He said that General Valluy [1] had been pursuing this matter and had just left his office. The Admiral had given him no definite word since he heard that the State Department had requested we hold up on informing the French.

I informed the Admiral that this arose from a suggestion that it might be useful for the President to be able to inform the French when he meets with them in Bermuda but that it had not been our thought that the delivery of the planes be held up for this purpose if they would be ready ahead of time. The Admiral stated that he now had word from the Air Force that the planes would be ready and were expected to depart not later than December 12. The Air Force apparently still feels that the French have not got proper facilities for handling these additional planes but the Admiral felt that we should go ahead anyway. I asked him to take no action with General Valluy until I had checked further.

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[1] Gen. Jean E. Valluy, Chief of the French Military Mission in Washington and French Member of the NATO Standing Group.

Subsequently, Mr. MacArthur and I spoke to the Secretary who telephoned Admiral Radford and told him that he wanted to get off a personal message to Bidault, from the President and himself, in order to obtain a little political credit with the French prior to Bermuda. He therefore suggested that this message go out this afternoon and that Admiral Radford inform General Valluy tomorrow. Admiral Radford agreed to this procedure.[2]

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[2] Telegram 1930 to Paris, Nov. 23, repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 920, read as follows: "Please convey following personal message to Bidault 'I wanted you and Prime Minister Laniel to know that following your urgent request for early delivery of 25 additional C-47 aircraft for Indochina the President and I have looked into this matter carefully. It gives us great pleasure to tell you that we are now able to give you an affirmative answer to this request the importance of which we fully realize.'

"FYI. Admiral Radford will inform General Valluy of this decision tomorrow. Planes expected to be ready to depart not later than December 12." (751G.5 MSP/11-2353)

751G.00/11-2753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Philippines[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, November 27, 1953—7:48 p. m.

1421. As you are aware, Department considers struggle against Communist supported Viet Minh in Indochina crucial factor in total effort guarantee free world security. Department greatly encouraged at recent evidences French and Vietnamese determination and capability achieve ultimate victory. Department has been concerned at failure Philippine Government appreciate issues involved and join 35 nations which have recognized duly established Governments of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and supported UN candidacy these countries.

At such time as in your discretion may appear appropriate, please take opportunity of discussing this matter informally with Magsaysay[2] expressing hope his administration will at early date take constructive steps to recognize governments of Associated States and to throw highly important moral support of Magsaysay and Philippine Government to our side in this vital struggle. Department confidently expects Magsaysay to become dynamic symbol free world cause in

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.

[2] Ramon Magsaysay was elected President of the Republic of the Philippines on Nov. 10 and assumed office on Dec. 30.

Southeast Asia but believes elimination anomaly Philippine attitude toward Indochina prerequisite of progress this direction.

DULLES

751.5 MSP/11-2753

The Acting Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs (Nolting) to the Deputy Director for Program and Planning, Foreign Operations Administration (Ohly)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] November 27, 1953.

MY DEAR MR. OHLY: The Department has studied carefully the proposed statement on aid to France which has been prepared for submission to the Bureau of the Budget in connection with the fiscal 1955 aid program.[2] We support fully the proposed aid figure of $800 million, to be programmed as assistance to the Governments of France and the Associated States of Indochina, toward financing part of the costs of the war in Indochina during the calendar 1955 period. This amount is exclusive of any request for regular MDAP assistance for Indochina. You will recall that the Department's memorandum to the National Security Council last September 8, in which the FOA concurred, stated the view that "the French program holds promise of success and can be implemented effectively. It should be recognized that, given favorable progress in the 1953–54 campaign, a substantial further contribution of United States aid will probably be required in fiscal year 1955."

The Department concurs in the estimate that the need for such aid in 1955 will probably continue at the same level as in 1954. Although we do not have over-all estimates for 1955, and in fact have at this time only an outline of expenditure estimates for 1954, we did receive from the French last spring a projection of requirements for the Associated States forces through 1955. This projection indicates that the cost of these growing forces will again increase in 1955, as it did in 1954, exclusive of the cost of MDAP assistance. Although a similar projection is not available for the French Expeditionary Forces, we believe that as long as these forces remain at the present strength, their cost is not likely to decline, in view of the large proportion of recurring costs in relation to total costs. There are now no French plans for any reduction of these forces prior to the fulfillment of the Navarre plan, and in fact the French are increasing their air personnel in Indochina.

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[1] Drafted by Edgar J. Beigel of WE.

[2] For documentation on this subject, see volume VI.

Consequently, our best estimates indicate that in 1955 the over-all cost of the war in Indochina, exclusive of MDAP, is likely to remain at the same level as in 1954, if not increase because of the expansion of local forces. On the other hand there is no basis at this time to believe that there will be very much improvement in the ability of France and the Associated States to increase their contributions toward the financing of the war effort. The United States therefore will be faced with the necessity of providing at least the same magnitude of financial support in 1955 as during the present fiscal year. Our basic reasons for this aid are outlined in NSC 124/2 and in the memoranda underlying NSC Actions 874 and 897.[3] The revision of NSC 124/2, now under consideration in the Planning Board, reaffirms the need for continuing financial assistance in support of these military operations.[4]

To achieve our basic policy objectives in Indochina, the Department agrees that it will be necessary to seek the required Congressional authorization in order that the United States may be prepared, as necessary, to continue its financial support of military operations in Indochina on the present scale. This we agree would involve the provision of aid on the order of $800 million from fiscal 1955 funds. The Department believes however that in considering this program, and presumably in presenting it to the Congress, it should be understood that the actual programming of the aid would be subject to (*a*) further study of over-all costs of the war effort in 1955, (*b*) possible reductions in the amount of United States support if France and the Associated States become more able to finance the war, and (*c*) the continued carrying out of the Laniel–Navarre program in 1954 and in 1955, in accordance with the agreement of September 29, 1953.

I suggest that in its hearings on this program, the Bureau of the Budget may wish to hear from Mr. Philip Bonsal, who has just returned from Indochina as the State Department representative on the United States Joint Military Mission which surveyed the military situation and the progress achieved under the Laniel–Navarre program. In view of the size of the proposed French program for fiscal 1955, and the importance which the Department attaches to it, I am sending a copy of this letter to the Director of the Budget.

Sincerely yours, FREDERICK E. NOLTING, JR.

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[3] For the text of NSC 124/2, "U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia," June 25, 1952, see volume XII. For text of NSC Action No. 874, Aug. 6, see p. 718. For NSC Action No. 897, see extract from the memorandum of discussion at the 161st Meeting of the National Security Council, Sept. 9, p. 780.

[4] The revision was embodied in NSC 177, "U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia," Dec. 30, 1953. NSC 177 as amended was adopted by the National Security Council on Jan. 14, 1954. The amended report was issued as NSC 5405, Jan. 16, 1954; for extracts, see p. 971.

751G.00/11-2753

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] November 27, 1953.

Subject: Westward movement of Viet Minh units

Army G–2 tells us that four of the six Viet Minh infantry divisions in North and Central Viet Nam are now moving westward. Two divisions, plus elements of a third are moving from their recent positions North and West of the Hanoi–Haiphong perimeter in the direction of Son-La–Lai-Chau. One division reinforced with half of another is moving from Central Viet Nam, south of the perimeter, in the direction of Central Laos.

Two divisions, one near the Northern edge of the perimeter (312) and one of the Southern edge (320) remain in place apparently as a threat to penetration of the perimeter defenses and to force defensive units to remain.

We do not know how far the Viet Minh troops have advanced, but French Intelligence estimates that the movement discloses an intent to occupy the area between the Red River to the North and the Black River to the South which is the stronghold of the Thai tribesmen who harass the Viet Minh, through guerrilla activity under French leadership, in the general area Lai-Chau–Son-La.

Perhaps in anticipation of this movement, the French Commander, General Cogny, dropped six parachute battalions at Dien Bien Phu on November 20, and has sent patrols from there North to Lai-Chau. An airstrip has been rehabilitated and some heavy equipment dropped. This operation was the largest air force exercise so far executed in the war.

Continued occupation of Dien Bien Phu will block Viet Minh use of one of the two principal East-West roads leading into Northern Laos. Viet Minh attacks against Franco-Vietnamese installations in that area may be an indication of renewed Viet Minh incursions against Laos, or else an effort to clear away forces having a harassing capacity against the Viet Minh.

If the movement of the 325 division from its present location in central Viet Nam is continued in the direction of central Laos it would support the hypothesis that invasion of Laos is the principal Viet Minh plan for the time being.

We have insufficient information of the enemy movements or of the French plans to arrive at any firm conclusion as to the importance of this development. The enemy movement may not take its final form for several weeks. Nevertheless, the Viet Minh are moving some forty to fifty thousand troops away from the perimeter for a still undisclosed purpose.

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[1] Drafted by Robert E. Hoey of PSA. The map which accompanies the source text has not been reproduced.

(You will recall that the French were informed on November 24 that the U.S. would supply twenty five additional C–47s. They are expected to be in Indochina by the end of December. The current operation will substantially increase the requirement for airlift capacity whether defensive or offensive operations are undertaken.)

751G.00/11–3053 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, November 30, 1953—7 p. m.

2110. Limit distribution. For the Secretary. Laniel asks me to assure you and the President that Ho Chi Minh interview[1] will not, of itself, and certainly not pending full consultation at Bermuda, be permitted to affect in any way Indochina policy which he has followed since he became Prime Minister. He and Vidal consider interview 98 percent propaganda and recognize that it has already had great effect both in France and Indochina and will make continuation of their policy considerably more difficult. Laniel is nevertheless confident that he can keep his governments support without going further in direction of negotiations than he did in his November 24 statement (Embassy's telegram 2055, November 25).[2] He did not speculate as to what situation might be under another government in January. Navarre has reported belief that in six months he should be able to achieve major improvement in military situation, including particularly cleaning up south. I reminded them of very long time which had elapsed between first hint and actual opening of Korean truce negotiations and of importance to any eventual negotiations of first obtaining best possible military position.

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[1] On Nov. 29, the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* published an exchange of questions and answers with Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh indicated willingness to negotiate an armistice with the French. For text of the interview, see Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, (4 vols.; Hanoi, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961–1962), vol. III, pp. 408–410. The text as it appeared in *Le Monde* on Dec. 1, is in *Documents on International Affairs, 1953*, pp. 447–448.

[2] Telegram 2055 from Paris, Nov. 25, transmitted highlights of comments on Indochina delivered by Premier Laniel during debate in the National Assembly on EDC, November 23–24. The summary of Laniel's remarks read in part as follows: "France today unanimous in wishing end as soon possible Indochina conflict which also stands in way enlargement our military role Europe. In this regard, government will draw its inspiration at Bermuda from wish expressed October 28 by Assembly 'make use every possible means in order effect general pacification Asia through negotiation.' Korean Armistice has proved it was possible stop armed conflict and it ought prove point departure for general examination dispute FE." (751G.00/11–2553) For text of the Premier's statement on Indochina, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1953, Débats*, p. 5485.

As indication of pressure here Vidal subsequently told me that President Auriol had summoned Laniel at 3:00 this morning and told him to consult representatives of three Associated States immediately with view to seeking earliest possible opening of negotiations with representatives of Ho Chi Minh. Laniel had flatly refused and said that he had no intention of changing his policy, at least until he had consulted US and UK at Bermuda and then Associated States.

Despite Laniel's unquestioned sincerity on this, his November 24 statement left considerable latitude for negotiations and we must remember both the very heavy pressure which the Ho interview will unquestionably stimulate and the fact that Laniel government must constitutionally resign in mid-January.

ACHILLES

751G.00/11–3053 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, November 30, 1953—7 p. m.

2113. Repeated information Saigon 208. Marc Jacquet, Secretary of State for Associated States, said following today regarding Ho Chi Minh interview Swedish newspaper *Expressen:*

1. Jacquet has suspected possibility coming Ho Chi Minh *démarche* for several reasons, including (*a*) Viet Minh radio line, and (*b*) Bao Dai's increasing recent intransigency. Latter undoubtedly knew of Ho's *démarche* in advance, and will now become more attentiste than ever.

2. Jacquet had no warning of Swedish newspaper being used as intermediary and made his statement to paper late Saturday evening[1] without prior consultation with government (Embassy telegram 2096).[2]

3. He is distressed by Laniel's reaction. They had two-hour session together this morning, in course of which Prime Minister explained why he had issued government "mise au point" to effect that interpretation Jacquet's statements "can not in any way be considered as corresponding to the position of French Government". Jacquet made no attempt conceal his displeasure that Prime Minister should attempt

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[1] Nov. 28.

[2] Telegram 2096 from Paris, Nov. 30, which reported highlights of the statement by Jacquet and other aspects of the French reaction to the Ho Chi Minh interview, is not printed. (751G.00/11–3053)

censure his comments which were "in keeping with related statements on subject made by other French officials in recent past". Laniel informed him he had been obliged to issue mise au point because Jacquet statement would "be misunderstood by and get us in trouble with Americans" who would now think again that France would neglect military prosecution of war in effort to negotiate peace at all costs.

4. Jacquet disagrees, stating that because of consideration set forth below, policy must remain unchanged and was "to pursue war with greatest effort possible as a means of improving chances for a successful negotiated peace". Laniel was mistaken to under-estimate American appreciation this fact, but was led by poor advisers within the government. This evident reference to Paul Reynaud.

5. Although Ho is undoubtedly in some military difficulties, this could not possibly explain *démarche.* In addition to obvious attempt to fan existing French desire for end to Indochina war, step also probably designed to throw wrench into Bermuda and shift blame continuation Indochina war to West. Nonetheless, Jacquet believes that Ho is serious and ready to make attempt to negotiate after Bermuda, "probably on impossible terms".

6. He regards French task as now being more urgent and difficult than ever. Ho *démarche* would not only increase difficulties at home with "negotiate now on any terms" faction, but will at same time make it mandatory for government to achieve steps necessary to clear atmosphere for negotiation on any acceptable terms.

7. This means two major and immediate steps, both of which can be accomplished through Bao Dai, (*a*) present Tam government "which everyone judges correctly as a puppet government" must be removed and replaced by government with truly nationalist representation and following, (*b*) negotiation of bilateral treaty with France proclaiming Vietnamese independence and fixing new association must be undertaken and completed before any negotiation with Ho can take place. Only after these two steps have been accomplished can there be any hope carrying out a negotiation on "acceptable terms". In the meanwhile, war must be pursued actively.

Comment: Jacquet is a Gaullist and his position in the government has not therefore, become easier. He remains, however, the French official in Paris who, in our opinion, is closest to the Indochina problem and best qualified to pass judgment concerning it. He has learned a great deal in recent months and his recent trip to the Associated States has helped even more. His conclusions appear to arise from detailed study, observation and analysis of the facts, rather than from a combination of spotty knowledge and emotional reasoning, which is not uncommon here. He appears to be less motivated by internal political conclusions than most. For these reasons his comments are worthy of note.

Interview left us with strong impression that Ho *démarche* has increased difficulties of government considerably. Bao Dai may now become both more hesitant and more difficult while prospects of negotiating mutually satisfactory treaty association with Vietnamese Government are reduced (why negotiate with France now that France is going to negotiate with the Viet Minh?). No one in Cabinet yet expects *démarche* will lead to anything specific in way of negotiations, but it was nevertheless brilliantly timed and will succeed in making everyone's task more difficult.

ACHILLES

751G.00/12–153 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PRIORITY PARIS, December 1, 1953—1 p. m.

2115. Repeated information Saigon 210. Reference Embassy's telegrams 2110[1] and 2113.[2] Foreign Office has no doubt that Ho Chi Minh's brilliantly timed *démarche* will increase difficulties dealing with Indochina problem. Like Jacquet, Roux (Chief Far Eastern Department), believed that nothing could be counted on from Bao Dai while negotiation with Ho remained active possibility. Bao Dai could be counted on to exercise oriental propensity for buttering bread both sides and would now sit on fence until it was clear again on which side he should descend. First signs this attitude already apparent in failure get on with Franco-Vietnam negotiations and replace Tam government.

Roux declined state whether Foreign Office would choose regard intermediary of Swedish newspaper as official channel, but inclined think not. Perhaps Ho did not wish to be taken too seriously, else he might have used Swedish or other neutral Embassy in Peking, such as Indian as channel. Roux quoted Bidault as thinking *démarche* was nothing but propaganda.

Roux expounded theory that in addition to obvious intentions behind move, there might be effort to improve Peking position at Korean political conference, or any five power conference which might follow coming four power. Peking (and presumably USSR) would find it convenient to claim that move toward negotiations between belligerents in Indochina had already been made and subject Indochina war therefore excluded from consideration.

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[1] Dated Nov. 30, p. 887.

[2] *Supra.*

Roux believes possibility mutually satisfactory Franco-Vietnamese negotiations have suffered serious setback. How could present or prospective Vietnamese Government be expected discuss treaty relationship with France as long as they believed possibility existed for French to grant terms to Viet Minh?

Throughout Roux emphasized that Ho "feeler" was addressed only to France and that of course this was unacceptable and that even if it did lead to anything, which was unlikely, it would only be with full knowledge and participation States governments.

Foreign Office giving matter further study would have more to add shortly.[3]

ACHILLES

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[3] On the evening of Dec. 2, the French Government issued a communiqué stating that France had already made clear its views on the problem of the cessation of hostilities. It was up to the Viet Minh to make their views known through official channels. France and the Associated States would consider them. For text of the communiqué, see *Documents on International Affairs, 1953*, pp. 478–479.

The Embassy in Paris transmitted an analysis of the Ho Chi Minh interview and its impact on French policy in despatch 1508, Dec. 8. The Embassy indicated that while basic French policy had not changed, the possibility that some sort of negotiations would ultimately develop had increased. (651.51G/12–853)

The Ho Chi Minh interview was considered at the 173d Meeting of the National Security Council, Dec. 3, in the course of the briefing of the Council on world developments by the Director of Central Intelligence. The memorandum of discussion of that meeting read in part as follows:

"Mr. [Allen] Dulles stated that Ho Chi Minh's alleged offer to negotiate with France had had little or no effect initially in Indochina, but after the friendly reception accorded this overture in Paris, the repercussions in Indochina became serious. Bao Dai had spurned the proposal, but it had nevertheless had a bad effect on the morale of the Vietnamese troops. Incidentally, Mr. Dulles pointed out, no Westerner really knows whether or not Ho Chi Minh is actually alive. No Westerner has seen him or heard his voice over the radio for many months. He must be presumed to be alive, but there is no proof." (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file)

751G.13/12–153 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, December 1, 1953—7 p. m.

942. Sent Paris 271. Bao Dai told me today that immediately after Prime Minister Tam's return Paris, a new government would be formed.

Tam would be allowed to exit gracefully since Bao Dai would suggest that he take a rest period, the intimation being that he would be recalled to government at a later period. The new government would be a "temporary" government.

This meant, Bao Dai said, that Tam would not be making the trip to the States to which he had been invited by reason of his position as Prime Minister.

Bao Dai did not indicate who would head or form the new government.

HEATH

751G.11/12–153 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, December 1, 1953—8 p. m.

943. Repeated information Paris 272, Hanoi, Vientiane, Phnom Penh unnumbered. When I took Congressman Judd and Subcommittee House Foreign Affairs Committee[1] to call on Bao Dai yesterday, latter did not appear much disturbed over Ho Chi-minh interview in Stockholm *Expressen*. Remarked merely that these continual references to eventual possibilities negotiations with Viet Minh which Laniel, Jacquet and other French leaders had made for French political effect had, as he had warned me two weeks ago, produced an inevitable result. Ho Chi-minh had come back with a meaningless offer to negotiate which was good propaganda for his side and which put the French "in a hole". Bao Dai did not then seem too much worried about Vietnamese reaction to this offer and agreed laughingly with Judd that if offer had been made to him instead of to French, he would have replied to Ho Chi-minh, "Fine. Lay down your arms and surrender and we will give you an armistice."

Bao Dai recalled on eve of his signing basic accords for Vietnamese independence of March 8, 1949 Viet Minh had sent emissaries French Government who said in effect, "Why give away all these concessions? We will sign another armistice with you along lines of our armistice of 1946" (which allowed French to keep Cochin-China as a colony). Bao Dai suggested that present interview was partly inspired by fear that his government and French were about to come to durable harmonious new arrangements.

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[1] The following members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee visited Indochina from Nov. 26 to Dec. 1: Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, Marguerite Stitt Church of Illinois, Clement J. Zablocki of Wisconsin, and E. Ross Adair of Indiana. Their observations were set forth in *Special Study Mission to Southeast Asia and the Pacific* (Committee print), 83d Cong., 2d sess., January 29, 1954.

When I saw Bao Dai today, he was in a much more pessimistic mood. He had just seen General Hinh, Vietnamese Chief of Staff, and had read Jacquet's unfortunate comment on Ho's interview which he took as proof there was some serious intention in French Government to conclude an armistice. Bao Dai spoke rather bitterly of Jacquet's recent statements on an armistice and other matters which he said had been inept. He went on to say he had never really been able to determine in just what groups real political power in France rested. In spite of recent changes in government, there had been a certain continuity in French foreign policy. Was it due to influence of big business, the big bankers or certain political groups? He implied if he could only determine what these forces were, he could negotiate with them in realistic terms for continued French cooperation with Vietnam. In regard to armistice, he said he would rather abdicate than to agree to any armistice which would divide country, afterwards starting a movement from outside which would reconquer all Vietnam. He asserted that armistice talk had already had some deleterious effect on morale of certain French expeditionary units who were asking why further sacrifice was necessary if there were going to be an armistice. (We have had no confirmation of any such reaction). He asserted again there was a very real understanding throughout Vietnam of the necessity of association or rather an alliance with French, provided it were on terms of equality. He declared that, properly formulated, such a union or alliance would gain an overwhelming majority of votes in a Vietnamese plebiscite. French should understand this and make some effort to make a "French union" or preferably an "alliance", attractive to Vietnamese aspirations of independence and equality.

I told Bao Dai that while I was without instructions, I felt certain that any American influence with France would be exerted against any armistice which would leave door open to eventual Communist conquest of Vietnam. Personally, I could see no basis for an armistice and no reason for it since Franco-Vietnamese forces had a good plan and support and were on road to victory. Bao Dai agreed but said it would be a little difficult for America to exert effective influence because of our action in accepting an armistice in Korea. He realized thoroughly that situation was quite different in Korea, but nevertheless our action in Korean truce made it difficult for us to push for fighting on to victory.

HEATH

INR–NIE files

National Intelligence Estimate[1]

[Extracts]

SECRET WASHINGTON, 1 December 1953.

NIE 63/1

PROBABLE SHORT-TERM DEVELOPMENTS IN FRENCH POLICY[2]

. . . .

7. In Indochina, we believe that even if the Laniel–Navarre Plan is successful the French do not expect to achieve a complete military victory in Indochina and probably aim only at improving their position sufficiently to negotiate a political settlement.

8. If no negotiations take place within the next 18 months, France would probably continue its effort in Indochina, *provided that:* (*a*) the US assumed virtually the total financial burdens of the war; (*b*) the planned buildup of Vietnam forces permitted reduction of French forces; (*c*) the Indochina states remained in the French Union; and (*d*) France continued to receive US support for its position in Europe and North Africa.

9. If the above French conditions were not largely satisfied France would probably propose UN intervention or direct military participation by the US. Failing in this, France would probably seek in time to negotiate directly with the Communists for terms which would permit withdrawal with minimum loss.

. . . .

*Probable French Policies in Indochina**

37. The gradual deterioration of French will to continue the Indochina war had been checked at least temporarily by the Laniel–

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[1] For full text of this report, see volume VI. Of the sections printed here, paragraphs 7–9 are from the conclusions of the report, while paragraphs 37–41 are from the discussion portion.

[2] According to a note on the cover sheet, "The Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 24 November 1953. The FBI abstained, the subject being outside of its jurisdiction.

"The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Joint Staff."

*For a more comprehensive statement of the situation in Indochina see NIE–91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through Mid-1954," 4 June 1953; and NIE–63. However, these papers were published before the Laniel–Navarre Plan developed. The estimates with respect to French policy in Indochina contained therein are superseded by paragraphs 37–41 of this estimate. [Footnote in the source text. For text of NIE 91, see p. 592. NIE 63, "France's Probable Future Role in the Western Security System," Jan. 23, 1953, is not printed. (INR–NIE files)]

Navarre Plan and by the greatly increased US financial assistance. The French are reinforcing their own units, accelerating the buildup of Indochinese national armies, and seeking to regain the military and political initiative. Despite strong parliamentary opposition, the French are likely to implement their promises of independence for the three states, on the basis of voluntary association with France in the French Union. No French government could continue the war outside of this French Union framework.

38. However, the implementation of the Laniel–Navarre Plan will probably be the last major French offensive effort in Indochina. We believe that even if the Laniel–Navarre Plan is successful, the French do not expect to achieve a complete military victory in Indochina. They probably aim at improving their position sufficiently to negotiate a settlement which would eliminate the drain of the Indochina war on France, while maintaining non-Communist governments in the Associated States and preserving a position for France in the Far East.

39. In view of its strong desire for a reduction of its Indochina commitments and for a solution of the Indochina problem, France will continue to seek discussion of the Indochina issue in international conferences and will almost certainly favor a conference between the US, UK, France, the USSR, and Communist China on Far East issues. We believe that in such conferences, or in any direct negotiations with the Viet Minh if necessary to obtain an agreement, France would press the US to consent to French acceptance of terms which the US would regard as weakening the Western position in Indochina and thus in Southeast Asia as a whole.

40. If no negotiations take place within the next 18 months we believe that France will take measures to reduce its Indochina commitment. However, in spite of the burdens of the Indochina war, France recognizes that it derives substantial advantages from its presence in Indochina and would probably continue the war in Indochina, *provided that:* (*a*) the US assumed virtually the entire financial burden of the war; (*b*) the planned buildup of Vietnam forces permitted reduction of French forces; (*c*) the Indochina states maintained their association with France in the French Union; and (*d*) France continued to receive US support for its position in Europe and North Africa.

41. In the event that the above French conditions were not largely satisfied, France would probably propose UN intervention or direct military participation by the US. Failing in this, France would probably seek in time to negotiate directly with the Communists for terms which would permit withdrawal with minimum loss.

751G.00/12–353 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 3, 1953—8 p. m.

958. Repeated information Paris 277. Comments in two recent telegrams from Paris (2113 to Department repeated Saigon 208 [1] and 2115, repeated Saigon 210) [2] have occasioned us some puzzlement.

In paragraph one of Paris telegram 2113, Jacquet is quoted as saying that Bao Dai "undoubtedly knew of proposed *démarche* in advance and will become more attentiste than ever". Likewise, Roux is quoted in Paris' 2115 as reaffirming this view and indicating that Bao Dai's alleged wait and see attitude was already apparent in his failure to get on with Franco-Vietnamese negotiations and to replace Tam government.

My recent telegrams will have dispelled, I trust, notion that Bao Dai was privy to Communist thrust as represented in Ho Chi Minh statement to Stockholm *Expressen*, although two weeks ago he expressed to me his fears lest French official references possibilities negotiations with Viet Minh would provoke phony armistice offer from Ho Chi Minh. I am convinced that he was taken entirely by surprise. As for assertion that Bao Dai will become more attentiste than ever we find absolutely no evidence here to sustain this thesis. On contrary, Bao Dai plainly told me that if French were now going to sell out to Viet Minh he would leave country and bide his time for an eventual future come-back.

My top secret 942 to Department, December 1, already indicates Bao Dai's attitude re formation of new government.

As for statement in Paris' 2113 that Jacquet is the French official in Paris closest to Indochina problem and best qualified to pass judgment concerning it, we know many experts on Indochina who would be quick to challenge this appraisal. Although he handled himself well during his recent tour in Indochina, his last three successive public statements have been resented by Vietnamese opinion. In two statements made here he broadly implied that present Vietnam Government is incapable and needs to be changed; criticized Vietnam armed forces; and, in his comment on Ho Chi Minh overture, aroused widespread doubt throughout Associated States re French intentions.

As indicated my telegram 952 yesterday, [3] it would seem to us that Paris Foreign Office could better devote its energies to devising means of using Viet Minh declaration to more constructive ends, such as impelling Vietnamese to enter negotiations more promptly, than merely wringing its hands and complaining of disastrous effects of latest Communist *démarche*. Furthermore, on military plane, as General Trapnell points out, time when enemy talks of armistice is time to hit him with everything we have.

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[1] Dated Nov. 30, p. 888.

[2] Dated Dec. 1, p. 890.

[3] Telegram 952 from Saigon, Dec. 2, reporting a discussion with Aubry, Chief of Cabinet to Commissioner General Dejean, is not printed. (651.51H/12–353)

HEATH

Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 185

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)[1]

SECRET BERMUDA, December 4, 1953.

Participants: M. Laniel, Prime Minister of France.
Mr. Douglas MacArthur II.

M. Laniel said he would like to see me alone for a few minutes, and accordingly I met alone with him at three this afternoon in his room. He said he first wished to bring me up to date on his thinking regarding Indochina in light of the recent Ho Chi Minh overture through the Swedish press.

He said the Ho overture was obviously a propaganda move and should be treated as such. On the other hand, it had created a serious problem not only with regard to the French Parliament but the French Government. In particular, President Auriol was soft and spongy and had wanted immediately to send a message to Ho that France was willing to negotiate. Certain members of the French Cabinet shared this view. Laniel reiterated his own conviction that there was no basis for negotiation with the Communist Vietminh until the French had established a position of military strength in Indochina. He had complete confidence in General Navarre and believed that by April Navarre would be able to be in a very substantially better military position than at present. Therefore, France should continue its military effort in Indochina with all the resources at its disposal and should not be diverted by Communist propaganda. Once France had established a strong military position, Laniel did not exclude the possibility of some form of negotiation to end the Indochina conflict. Laniel said the French Government would only give "consideration" to a peace feeler from Ho if it came through regular diplomatic channels—for example, through some neutral. He added that if such a "feeler" were received, France would only consider it in conjunction with the Governments of the Associated States.

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[1] This conversation occurred at the Bermuda Conference of the Heads of Government of the United States, United Kingdom, and France, Dec. 4–8. For documentation on the Bermuda Conference as a whole, see volume v. Briefing material for the conference, prepared on the various subjects which might be discussed, including Indochina, may be found in CFM files, lot M 88, box 166, and in Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 181.

I said to M. Laniel that I was glad to hear his determination to continue the war in Indochina to a successful conclusion. I said the recent news emanating from France had been disquieting in this respect. In particular, if the French gave the impression that they were ready to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh, which would in fact turn Indochina over to the Communists, the Associated States of Indochina would probably cease supporting the French effort there, which in turn would make General Navarre's task impossible since military success in Indochina must depend on the Associated States bearing an increasing part of the burden and effort in prosecuting the war there. Any indication that the French were going to make a deal with the Communists would be substantial encouragement to the fence-sitters in Indochina who then would begin to think in terms of making a deal with the Communists. This would be a disaster for France.

M. Laniel said he could assure me that he himself would never do anything which would result in turning Indochina over to the Communists, and he hoped I would make known his feelings in this respect to the President and the Secretary.

751G.00/12–553 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, December 5, 1953—4 p. m.

2190. Repeated information Saigon 220. In interview today with Senator Smith,[1] Jacquet confirmed fact that Buu Loc had been offered Prime Ministry 3 days ago but had not yet accepted and was "hesitant" because he feared for his personal safety in Vietnam. Minister considers replacement present government encouraging step forward but regrets losing Tam "who will probably be eliminated from active political life by being given a top Ambassadorship."

Minister expects Ho Chi Minh Swedish "feeler" to be followed in very near future by overture through official channels. Both he and Maurice Schumann whom Senator Smith saw yesterday stated that Paris Communists are taking active if not leading role in determining moves.

Jacquet developed his previously expressed thesis that essence of present policy should be gain time. If any eventual settlement is to be satisfactory negotiation can only take place in atmosphere military and political strength. War must be fought harder than ever while government is attracting nationalist support so that it can face general election which will be inevitable condition any settlement.

"If the present military and political programs (Navarre Plan,

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[1] Senator H. Alexander Smith stopped at Paris during his return trip to the United States following his visit to Indochina.

Franco-Vietnamese Treaty of Association, etc) are fought through hand in hand and American aid is continued, we should hold enough trump cards by the end of 1954 to permit us to negotiate with the enemy without risking the two things which we wish to prevent at all cost—the absorption of Indochina into the Moscow-Peking axis and the loss of the three states to the French Union."

ACHILLES

751G.00/12-553 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 5, 1953—5 p. m.

968. Repeated information Paris 279, Hanoi unnumbered. When I presented Senator Thye (Minn.)[1] to General Navarre yesterday, Navarre said that he was not particularly worried over Ho Chi Minh's "peace offer", since he was convinced that there were no practical possibilities of negotiating peace at present time. (*Comment:* A conviction which I share.) He was not worried over effect that a talking of peace might have on morale Franco-Viet troops and officers but, as was natural in the officers' messes, there was now some conversation and questioning as to what was stake for France in continuing fight. This "mess table" conversation was not desirable but was not to be taken seriously. He thought it possible that Ho Chi Minh's "peace offer" and reaction of interest in it in France might indeed have a good effect in causing Vietnamese to think more seriously about their danger, the war and the necessity of agreeing to some form of association with France which would justify latter in continuing fight here. He knew of course that in its present formulation French Union was unpalatable to certain Vietnamese Nationalists, but some sort of mutually advantageous, entirely acceptable formula could surely be found. While he personally could see that a formal association or contract perhaps was not necessary, French at home would insist on it. He ended by saying, "French people like contracts and you can't change them".

He continued to be greatly encouraged by military situation. There was no doubt that Viet Minh had planned serious attack on delta from October 15 last. Operation Mouette and present taking of Dien Bien Phu had spoiled that plan. Viet Minh might still make attack on delta but it would be later and would seem that it was no longer a "must" operation during this campaign. Actually during Mouette [garble] 20 [*320*] division had been hit so hard that it would take until end of month till it could be utilized, and equivalent of [garble] division was now moving into Thai country because of French operation at Dien Bien Phu and French promotion of counter-guerrilla activity among Thai mountain people. Recent development of Thai counter-guerrilla units was a most hopeful one. In next few months France might have to stand some very hard knocks but he was confident they would withstand them.

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[1] Edward J. Thye of Minnesota, member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, was on visit in Indochina.

HEATH

751G.00/12–753: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 7, 1953—6 p. m.

978. Repeated information Paris 281. Radio Dalat editorial December 5 (full text transmitted FBIS SO 71000) apparently constitutes Bao Dai's reply to Ho Chi Minh *démarche* in Swedish paper *Expressen* November 29. Editorial on whole takes reasonable position, leaving way open for bona fide negotiations among Vietnamese but condemning Ho declaration as pure propaganda and reissuing open invitation to Nationalists to rejoin national cause. Dalat output does not go so far as coldly logical demand that Viet Minh lay down arms and recognize legal government but it is properly skeptical of Ho interview stressing non-Vietnamese tone of statements and castigating entire move as one more verbal weapon in Communist campaign to split Western Powers and prevent ratification of EDC. Editorial also mentions clear-sighted American appraisal of international character of IC conflict and refusal see Vietnam become Chinese satellite.

Lack of realism and wishful thinking of majority Vietnamese, including generally astute Bao Dai, show through, however, in phrases such as following: "A conflict of that nature (civil war) does not end by extermination of one side but by settlement which freezes military positions of both camps or by new political arrangement"; "USSR is in phase of internal rebuilding, if not of weakness, and . . . in world this country seeks more to limit its engagements than to hurry its expansionist march"; and "there is very little chance that Peking will intervene openly in IC conflict". Editorial also states it not impossible USSR will abandon Viet Minh as it abandoned Greek Communists; this statement itself is possibly reasonable, but to compare 30,000 Markos Greeks with 300,000 armed Viet Minh is obviously not. Viet Minh would be formidable enemy for sometime after cessation Russian aid.

Journal d'Extreme Orient printed significant quotations on front page with headline "Nothing is Impossible", giving clear implication way was open for "reconciliation".

HEATH

396.1/12-753 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State[1]

SECRET BERMUDA, December 7, 1953.

[Received December 8—2:03 a. m.]

Secto 24. Dept pass Defense. Before discussing communiqué[2] meeting heads of government which began 5:30 p. m. December 7 took up last two remaining agenda items: Indochina; and security assurances.[3]

Bidault began with detailed review military situation Indochina. Pointing out Viet Minh now apparently having difficulties in augmenting troop strength he referred in contrast to French reinforcements which have been set a difficult task in view of present French public opinion and also to continuing build up military forces Associated States particularly Vietnam. General Navarre doing well in this build-up particularly re creation mobile force instead of former effort maintain garrisons everywhere. None of this would have been possible stated Bidault, except for US assistance financial and material.

Bidault reported first real effort just made in Red River delta aimed at eliminating broad Communist infiltration by night. Navarre's efforts have stopped enemy's dry season offensive prepared by Chinese in Laos and both delta branches. Though Bidault claimed military situation now better than ever before, he also stressed continuing difficulties including necessity for continuous rotation French troops, long lines of communication back to France and continuing casualties.

Bidault then mentioned bold French Government declaration July 3 to eliminate any doubts re independence three Associated States. Subsequently, certain elements endeavored provoke break with French Union with serious repercussions both in France and Indochina.

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[1] Drafted by Brewster H. Morris of the Office of German Affairs, a member of the U.S. Delegation at the Bermuda Conference. Repeated to London, Paris, Moscow, and Bonn.

[2] The communiqué of the Bermuda Heads of Government Conference, Dec. 7, read in part as follows:

"We reviewed the situation in the Far East. The immediate object of our policy continues to be the convening of the political conference provided for in the Korean Armistice agreement. This would provide the means for reaching a peaceful settlement of the Korean question and for making progress in restoring more normal conditions in the Far East and South East Asia.

"In Indo-China we salute the valiant forces of France and of the three Associated States of Indo-China fighting within the French Union to protect the independence of Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam. We recognize the vital importance of their contribution to the defense of the free world. We will continue to work together to restore peace and stability in this area." For the full text of the communiqué, see volume v.

[3] The discussion summarized here occurred at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Tripartite Heads of Government Meeting, Dec. 7. For the U.S. Delegation Minutes of the meeting, see *ibid.*

Permanence of this broad flexible relationship known as French Union in fact constitutes *sine qua non* of continuation French effort. Bidault also mentioned Ho Chi-minh's proposals which French not sure "even drafted in Asia" (for example his attack on EDC). These proposals couched in such terms impossible to discuss.

Bidault stressed French will never abandon their comrades and supporters in Associated States and will therefore never negotiate without latter's approval. Real international framework seems essential to any negotiations. At same time war has been going on for seven years and many Frenchmen therefore favor negotiations with Viet Minh. Bidault referred somewhat vaguely to possibilities mediation five-power conference and negotiations with China stating however Red China would never accept participation of Associated States which must somehow be represented. War must not, however, be prolonged any longer than necessary for free world and French honor.

Speaking with obvious feeling Churchill then complimented French warmly for their effort on behalf of empire and freedom. Besides doing well in Indochina he praised their efforts in North Africa stating he greatly impressed by French civilizing work there. In contrast Churchill expressed deep regret that British left India. At same time he urged French to consider prolongation military service which British have found to be very advantageous. This permits, he stated, troops to "breed their own kind."

President associated himself completely with British in complementing French for their great and protracted military efforts Indochina. He reported having just learned that another carrier, 25 transport planes and some helicopters would soon be delivered by US. President referred Bidault's somewhat cryptic reference to five-power conference pointed out this was "bad word for United States" and he wished to point this out even though this was no place to discuss details of such problem.

In reply Bidault emphasized had not wished cause any concern to President. Bidault claimed he had always opposed five-power conference on world affairs as now demanded by Soviets but stated we could accept five-power or even larger conference on specific Southeast Asia problems providing Associated States properly represented.

President replied US would certainly always be ready to study any concrete proposals.

[Here follows discussion of other subjects.]

DULLES

711.5851G/12–853

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] December 8, 1953.

Subject: General O'Daniel's visit to Indochina, November 6–15, 1953.[2]

General O'Daniel's mission was in Indochina from Friday afternoon, November 6, to Sunday morning, November 15. Of these nine days, three were spent in the Hanoi area and one each in Laos and Cambodia. A full account of the trip from the military point of view is contained in the mission's report, prepared in Honolulu from November 17 to November 20. A copy of this document is attached with the original of this memorandum.[3] It is recommended that you read General O'Daniel's summary of his findings and recommendations.

Although I was with General O'Daniel most of the time, I had several long talks with Ambassador Heath with whom I stayed. I saw Bao Dai, Prime Minister Tam and his Foreign and Defense Ministers on the Vietnamese side as well as, on the French side, in addition to the military, Commissioner General Dejean, Raymond Offroy, his deputy, and other French officials in Saigon, Hanoi, Phnom Penh and Vientiane.

The purpose of this memorandum is to set down briefly my impressions and thoughts regarding current conditions and prospects in Indochina.

Background

It would be difficult to exaggerate what General Navarre has accomplished in the less than six months since he took command last May of an army whose reserves were practically exhausted and whose confidence in itself and its leaders was at a low ebb. The Viet Minh had seized and held the initiative throughout the campaign of 1952–1953. French successes had been defensive (defense of Nasan and of the major towns of Laos). And the achievement even of these results had practically exhausted all mobile reserves. The prospect for this campaign season appeared to be one in which the enemy, with his increased offensive potential, would be able to attack the widespread French Union forces at a point or points of his own choosing with the confidence that the ability of the French High Command to reinforce threatened points would soon be exhausted.

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[1] The following handwritten notation by Everett F. Drumright, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, appears at the top of the source text: "Seen by WSR [Robertson] on 12–12–53. A very well put memo."

[2] For the major findings of the O'Daniel Mission, see telegram from General O'Daniel to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Nov. 19, p. 879.

[3] See footnote 2, *ibid.*

This difficult military situation was complicated by a growing weakness in the political support of the struggle in France. Pierre Mendes France failed of investiture as Prime Minister of France by only 13 votes out of a required total of 313 on a platform promising a cessation of the war in Indochina. The extravagances of the King of Cambodia had served to highlight the unsatisfactory nature of the relations between France and the Associated States and the necessity for clarifying the French Union concept in a manner to generate much needed increased support of the war effort by the peoples of the Associated States without detracting from the necessary support of that effort in France.

On the occasion of General O'Daniel's visit to Indochina in late June and early July of this year, General Navarre developed his general concept of how to fight the war. That concept was adopted with only minor modifications by the French Government in July and August and, in August and September, the United States Government reached agreement with the French Government for increased support by us of the French effort in Indochina to be based upon the Navarre concept.

On July 3rd, the French Government made a declaration designed to improve political relations with the Associated States by inviting the latter to negotiate with France on a basis of sovereign equality within the French Union so as to "perfect" their independence.

General Navarre's Achievements

The major achievements of General Navarre since last summer may be stated as follows:

(1) The development of a new offensive spirit which permeates the French military establishment in Indochina.

(2) The constitution of a mobile reserve or battle corps consisting at the present time of 13 Groupes Mobiles (a Group Mobile is an infantry regiment plus an artillery battalion) and other elements including an airborne force of division strength. There were only six such Groupes Mobiles last summer and they were, at that time, mostly tied down to specific defensive tasks. The number of Groupes Mobiles will be raised to twenty next summer. (This, incidentally, is the force which General Navarre's predecessor, General Salan, estimated he would need in order to come to grips effectively with the enemy regular forces.)

(3) The arrival in Indochina of the equivalent of three additional regiments from France. The decision to send such troops represents a great, and to many, an unexpected, personal triumph for General Navarre.

(4) In terms of actual operations, the French High Command took the initiative with the spectacular and successful parachute raid on Langson in July. Although the enemy has a high offensive potential and although it was generally believed at the outset of the present fight-

ing season that he intended to use it, he has not as yet done so. To some extent this is due to various limited offensives conducted as a part of General Navarre's strategic plan for this fighting season in the North. The most important of these operations (known as Mouette and conducted between October 15 and November 3) is believed by General Navarre to have cost the enemy in killed and wounded and in material losses about one-third of the effectives of one of his regular divisions (320). Operations conducted by French Union troops and local irregulars in the Thai country northwest of the Tonkin delta have obliged the enemy to divert to that area the equivalent of perhaps one-half of another division (316). The recent capture of the relatively important town of Dien Bien Phu with its airstrip is a part of this pattern. Other operations are in prospect. As a result of those already conducted, the offensive possibilities open to the enemy have been reduced and furthermore the ratio between the strength of the Franco-Vietnamese mobile forces and of the enemy's regular units has moved in favor of General Navarre who is of course also adding daily to his battle corps while that of the enemy is not being increased, quantitatively at least (see below for a discussion of enemy possibilities and intentions).

These developments should be viewed within the framework of General Navarre's over-all strategic concept. Stated very briefly, that concept involves two offensives, one in the South and the other in South Central Viet Nam, to begin in January, 1954 and to make it possible to concentrate all available mobile forces in North Annam and in Tonkin for the final campaign to be initiated in October 1954. The two offensives planned for this year will be of unequal importance and duration. The first is designed to clear the equivalent of perhaps half a dozen regular enemy battalions and supporting regional and people's troops from the tip of South Viet Nam and thus to break the back of organized enemy resistance in this whole area. A single operation in considerable force is contemplated. The second operation involves clearing the enemy's 15 or 16 regular battalions with supporting regional and people's troops from the area of South Central Annam from Cape Varella to the vicinity of Tourane, a distance of some 200 miles. A campaign lasting from January to August, 1954, is involved. It will include a number of amphibious landings in conjunction with the use of troops from the mountain areas in order to surround the enemy and bring him to battle.

As a result of these two offensives, General Navarre hopes that the entire country up to about the 19th parallel will have been cleared of regular enemy opposition and that the final, decisive campaign can be undertaken when the rains cease in the north in October 1954. At that time, enemy strength will be concentrated in North Annam (Than Hoa, Vinh and Ha Tinh) and in and around the Delta. It is General Navarre's expectation that he will then be in a position permanently to occupy areas which the enemy will either have to fight for under conditions unfavorable to him or abandon and retire to areas where he can no longer maintain himself as an organized force.

Enemy Capabilities and Intentions

The question of the effect upon the enemy's morale and intentions of recent developments is both highly important and shrouded in mystery. There is an absence of hard information on the subject. Enemy propaganda shows no decrease in agressiveness or in confidence of ultimate victory. Yet certainly the transformation of French military thinking, the assumption of the initiative by the French High Command, the great increase in United States support for the Franco-Vietnamese war effort, the decreased probability of overt Chinese Communist support owing to the firm stand taken by the United States in Korea and in recent utterances by the President and the Secretary—all these developments must have had some impact on the Viet Minh thinking as to its plans and prospects. True, these developments have been in part counterbalanced by increasing evidence that the French people will not indefinitely support the war effort and by indications to be discussed below of the weakness of Vietnamese support for that effort.

In appraising enemy intentions, there would seem to be two main possible courses limiting the field of action within which he must make his decisions. The first would be to take the offensive energetically and to take maximum advantage of his still considerable offensive potential before General Navarre's build-up of forces reduces his possibilities. It is interesting to note that there has been, according to French intelligence, no important increase in enemy trained manpower in the last two years although, of course, his armament has been steadily improved. His possibilities are therefore decreasing in relation to those of the Franco-Vietnamese forces and it would presumably be to his advantage to take the offensive sooner rather than later if he ever intends to do so. It should be noted that it is General O'Daniel's opinion, as expressed in his report, that any all-out offensive at this time against the Delta would be disastrous for the enemy. Generals Navarre and Cogny expect, however, that the enemy will conduct offensive operations.

The second possibility from the enemy's point of view would seem to be one of evading contact with the Franco-Vietnamese regular forces except under exceptionally favorable conditions and of frustrating by delaying tactics and merely partial engagements General Navarre's endeavors to come to grips with them. The rationale for such a strategy would seem to be the thought that time is on the side of the Viet Minh, that political stamina in France and in Viet Nam in favor of pursuing the struggle is limited, that scepticism as to the possibility of forcing an end to the struggle is growing, and that the United States in the absence of concrete results may well be inclined to reconsider its present policy of massive material and financial assistance, especially in view of the amount of news coming out of Washington regarding great economies to be effected in U.S. foreign military and economic assistance programs.

Neither of the courses described is probably feasible in its entirety. The enemy cannot mount, in the opinion of General O'Daniel, a decisive offensive in the Delta. Nor will it be possible for him entirely to evade the attacks of General Navarre's growing battle corps unless he wishes to throw in the sponge. And there are no signs of such a desire.

In determining what the enemy is apt to do, there are two other factors which might be considered. In the first place, there is every evidence that Chinese Communist assistance to the Viet Minh is stable at a level indicating a definite intention on the part of Peking to continue its engagement in the struggle. Until fairly recently, that assistance consisted of a number of critical items of weapons and ammunition. It has now been broadened to include a large number of basic and even luxury items for the Viet Minh army. The deduction of the French intelligence people is that this indicates a decision to establish and develop the Viet Minh army as a modern, stable force.

In the second place, there is the perhaps significant fact that the enemy of recent months has made a minimum use of his possibilities for terrorism and sabotage particularly in Hanoi and Saigon. There is a belief among some French officials—I believe that General Navarre shares it to a certain extent—that the Viet Minh may well be preparing some sort of very widespread action in areas where a considerable degree of peace and security has recently prevailed. Such action would involve an intensification of guerrilla tactics coupled with widespread terroristic attacks on a given day on French citizens and on Vietnamese personalities who have worked for Franco-Vietnamese cooperation.

We may therefore look for the enemy to evade offensive action in force by General Navarre to the extent possible (his success or lack of it here is perhaps the key to the current effort) to seize upon any weak points for attacks by his regular forces, to create opportunities for such attacks by infiltration and by creating a maximum of guerrilla and other disturbances. The strategy resulting from this combination of tactics would seem to be designed especially for the Tonkin area where it might be particularly effective and in fact disrupt General Navarre's current time-table described above. General Navarre has told General Cogny that the delta must be held this campaign season with the forces already there, that Cogny is to request no reinforcements. If the enemy can cause this policy to be reversed and make it necessary, as was the case last year for mobile troops from other areas to be sent into the area, to permit the Franco-Vietnamese troops to hold their position there, the effect would be to delay General Navarre's planned offensives in the South and Center.

The Training, Morale and Command Control of the Vietnamese Army

The purpose of the above discussion is to underline General Navarre's problems in the military field. He is also confronted with a serious problem in what might be termed the politico-military field. It relates to the training, the morale and the command control of the Vietnamese army.

In order to understand the problem, it must be remembered that there are currently about 428,000 Vietnamese soldiers fighting on our side. Of these perhaps 200,000 are in the Vietnamese regular army, 50,000 are Vietnamese army suppletifs, or special contract soldiers, 78,000 belong to local militia and police forces and 100,000 are in the French regular army (50,000 regulars and 50,000 suppletifs). The Vietnamese army is being trained by the French army which has devoted 900 officers and 4500 noncommissioned officers to the purpose in various ways, i.e., some of these French officers and noncommissioned officers are operating training schools while others are leading Vietnamese units.

Leadership in the Vietnamese army is the major problem. The main source of such leadership is the group of Vietnamese officers, noncommissioned officers and soldiers who have had careers in the regular French military establishment. These people are primarily professional soldiers. Many of them have been projected into positions much higher than those for which their previous experience qualifies them. They are perhaps abnormally inclined to vanity, pretentiousness, and personal rivalries. They are on the whole good fighters and they recognize the opportunity for glory and advancement which the present war offers them. But they are not inspired with the patriotic spirit and the spirit of sacrifice which produces General Washingtons or Syngman Rhees.

We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that the French professional army in Viet Nam is creating, in its own image so far as professional qualities are concerned, a strictly professional armed force. It is a force which has already produced some excellent regular army units up to the level of regimental combat teams. More such units will be produced. In fact, General Navarre estimates by the middle of 1955 half of his battle corps will consist of Vietnamese army mobile groups and that they will be organized on a divisional basis. But the brunt of the offensive fighting against the enemy will, for the immediate future, be borne by the French expeditionary corps. The major role of the Vietnamese will be in what the French call "Guerre en Surface". That is a most important role since upon it depend the security and the morale of the inhabitants on our side and the safeguarding of communications and vital installations of all kinds.

Last February, the Franco-Vietnamese Defense Council took some resolutions which we heartily approved at the time. In accordance with those resolutions the autonomy of the Vietnamese army so far as administration, supply and training were concerned were greatly broadened. Similarly, it was stated that the French would turn over to the Vietnamese military authorities areas which those authorities believed could be controlled and safeguarded by the Vietnamese army. In fact a number of such areas were turned over in the South. In them the Vietnamese army has full operational control.

Last August, the French Military Command cleared the Province of Bui-chu in the Tonkin Delta of Viet Minh elements (Operation Tarentaise). This province was surrounded by areas in which the Viet Minh regular forces were strongly infiltrated and where they moved about with a certain amount of freedom. Nevertheless, General Hinh requested that Bui-chu be turned over to him. In spite of the misgivings of General Cogny and of the Vietnamese Governor of North Vietnam this was done. General Hinh took over the area with 13 of the new light battalions, some of which had had less than two months unit training and some of which were composed of former prisoners of war captured from the enemy. (It is also rumored that some of these troops were rather roughly conscripted.) The enemy promptly took advantage of this situation. He inflicted two or three catastrophic defeats upon these light battalions, captured a great deal of equipment and apparently induced about one-half of one of the battalions to desert to him.

As a result, and with the consent of General Hinh, General Cogny again took over the operational command of the area and the situation is generally under control although a further clearing operation, a repetition of the one which took place as recently as last August, will eventually have to be envisaged. This repetition of the labor and losses inherent in clearing operations is particularly galling to the French officers responsible for the area.

General Navarre has decided in view of the Bui-chu experience and of the general situation as it affects the training of Vietnamese units, that the steps which were taken last February must be modified. He is seeking agreement to do this at the next meeting of the Franco-Vietnamese Defense Committee. He has secured the agreement of Bao Dai and Tam and Defense Minister Quat as well as of General Hinh and the matter will undoubtedly go through in a generally face-saving manner. The result will be to restore unity of operational command and to give General Navarre more control over the training and administration of the Vietnamese army.

On the one hand it is satisfying to report that this adjustment is about to be achieved without any particular difficulty. On the other hand that absence of difficulty illustrates also the absence of a strong political sentiment on the Vietnamese side. Neither the Vietnamese army, nor the Vietnamese Government, nor the Franco-Vietnamese cause in the fight against the Viet Minh inspire anywhere near an ideal degree of popular support.

Political Conditions

In the political field there is little progress to report since the first visit of the O'Daniel mission, at least so far as support for the war effort is concerned. There has been no marked increase in that support as a result of the French Government's declaration of July 3rd inviting the Vietnamese Government (and the Governments of Cambodia and Laos) to write their own tickets in the matter of their relations with France. The negotiations between France and Viet Nam have not yet started although five months have elapsed since the declaration. The only major development has been the resolution of the Vietnamese National Congress against adherence to the French Union "in its present form"—a resolution which lowered the already precariously low level of French public and parliamentary support for the war effort in Indochina. Conversely, the violent French reaction to what many Vietnamese political leaders regarded as a minimum statement of their position, while it may have produced an increased awareness of the realities involved in the pursuit of the current struggle, hardly stimulated Vietnamese enthusiasm or confidence. President Auriol's statement at the time of the meeting of the High Council of the French Union regarding the basic equality of the members of the Union has been helpful.

We must face the fact that Vietnamese public support for the Vietnamese Government and for the war effort continues far below what would be desirable in spite of the fact that over 400,000 Vietnamese are bearing arms on the Franco-Vietnamese side in the struggle. Such support might be somewhat increased if Bao Dai reorganizes and strengthens his Government, replacing the able, hard-hitting but French identified Tam with a man of undoubted nationalist complexion and background such as Tri or Quat. Such a change now appears imminent. Favorable developments in Franco-Vietnamese relations might help to a moderate extent in the same direction. But short of real military progress, I can see no way in which political support—a factor which would be admittedly most useful in the winning of the war—can be anticipated or produced.

The impact of world developments on thinking in Viet Nam must not be overlooked. When we point to the fact that in the past 15 years Communism has enslaved some six hundred million people, the effect is undoubtedly in the case of most Americans to produce a determination to halt the advance of Communism and to support policies that give promise of doing so. In the case of a Vietnamese, however, surveying the prospects for his wartorn country of 24 million inhabitants, bordering on a new aggressive Communist China, the effect of recent Communist progress is to restrain him from engaging himself wholeheartedly on the side of the free world. Fence-sitting becomes an attractive posture coupled with a doctrinaire advocacy of complete theoretical independence. It is only when victory for our side and a definite check to Communist expansion appear clear probabilities that these people can be expected to abandon their present unsatisfactory position.

It should also be stated at this point that thinking of the war in terms of the East-West ideological struggle, in spite of the propaganda efforts of both sides, is not widespread outside of small intellectual circles. But doubt as to the outcome of the war which all can see and feel does exercise a widespread influence on the thinking of very considerable elements of the population and produces a real reluctance to become identified with our side among people whose support would be most valuable.

The armistice in Korea has also had an unsettling effect on the minds and will of our friends in Viet Nam as well as in France. It is argued that if the United States, the leader of the free world can stop short of complete victory and through a process of concession and compromise secure an end to hostilities in Korea, why should not the French and the Vietnamese do likewise, without any sort of moral blame, in order to terminate an exhausting struggle now in its eighth year. The thought that the United States negotiated from a position of considerably greater strength than that which the Franco-Vietnamese have as yet achieved since the United Nations troops in fact had forced the enemy back beyond his original point of departure, is not taken into account by those who look to compromise with Ho as a way out. Nor does the impossibility of defining the terms of any honorable or even secure compromise under present conditions prevent this sort of wishful thinking.

Conclusions

My conclusions may be very briefly summarized as follows:

(1) The carrying out of the Navarre concept affords a probability of Franco-Vietnamese military victory over the organized enemy

forces. We must therefore continue and if possible intensify our support of the Franco-Vietnamese military effort.

(2) Political support of the war effort in France and Viet Nam is below a safe or desirable level. Such support will rise as the military situation improves. We must convince the French leaders that their choice is between (*a*) the dishonorable abandonment of a seven-year military effort with certain adverse reactions on the whole French position in North Africa and in Western Europe or (*b*) holding on for a few more months at which time the honorable disengagement of a large part of France's present commitment from Indochina is almost certain, provided the Navarre concept is successfully carried out.

(3) There is no possibility of devising satisfactory conditions for a cease fire or for negotiations until and unless the military potential of the organized enemy forces is radically reduced. A cease fire today would mean sooner or later—probably sooner—a Communist take-over of the entire area.

(4) If the French decide to pull out, a situation will probably not exist in which we can replace them. Vietnamese public opinion as a whole would not in my judgment support enthusiastically the taking up by the United States of the fight abandoned by the French against their fellow Vietnamese however Communist they may be.[4] We would have no more support than the French have had and would presumably have to rely on the same elements. Furthermore, the probability is that, if it becomes apparent either that the French are about to abandon the struggle or that the prospect continues to be one of a military stalemate, a political situation will develop in Viet Nam as a result of which the people of that country will achieve a pseudo-neutralist solution of the present conflict. Such a solution would not permit an American intervention. (The question of the support of the United States public opinion for such an intervention is obviously beyond my competence; it is a most important factor.)

(5) No workable alternative to the success of the present Franco-Vietnamese effort which would obtain what we want in Indochina, i.e., the preservation of the area for the free world, appears in sight. Therefore, while we are justified in studying the situation which would exist if the present effort fails, we should concentrate our time and energies upon seeing to what extent we can improve, intensify,

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[4] The following marginal notation by Drumright appears at this point on the source text: "But we might have to take the gamble."

speed up and if necessary expand our present support of the Franco-Vietnamese effort.

FE files, lot 55 D 388, "Indochina"

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright)

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] December 8, 1953.

Subject: Desirability of Recognition by Associated States of Chinese Government

Participants: Mr. Pierre Millet, Counselor, French Embassy
FE—Everett F. Drumright, Deputy Assistant Secretary

In the course of a conversation on another subject today, Mr. Drumright raised with Mr. Millet the question of the French position toward recognition by the Associated States of the Chinese National Government. In reply, Mr. Millet said that in 1949 the French Government had taken the position that it would not be desirable for the Associated States to take steps to recognize the Chinese Government. The basic reason was, he said, that such recognition could only lead to exacerbation of relations with the Chinese Communists which the French Government is most anxious to avoid. Mr. Millet indicated that there had been no marked change in the French position since that time.

Mr. Millet then inquired about the United States position. In reply, Mr. Drumright said that the United States considers that relations among the non-Communist states of East Asia should be encouraged and made more close. Mr. Drumright said he understood that Laos and perhaps Cambodia had raised the issue of recognition of Nationalist China with our representatives out there. We had told our representatives to express the view that we believed establishment of relations with the Chinese Government would be desirable and useful. Mr. Drumright said it is obvious that the Communist powers in East Asia are closely united, whereas the non-Communist powers stand separately and, in numerous cases, do not recognize one another. This is obviously disadvantageous to the non-Communist side and needs rectification. While making it clear that the United States would like to see the impetus for closer ties coming from the non-Communist states themselves and while recognizing the difficulties of bringing about a close association of the non-Communist states of East and South Asia, Mr. Drumright indicated to Mr. Millet that it is the United States policy to foster and encourage closer association.

751G.00/12–953 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 9, 1953—10 a. m.

986. Repeated information Paris 284, Hanoi unnumbered. Commanding [*Commissioner*] General DeJean returned Saigon today. He is very insistent that we should not worry over clamor in Paris for peace negotiations with Viet Minh provoked by Ho Chi-minh's "peace offer." He said he participated Inter-Ministerial meeting prior departure French delegation for Bermuda, during which without any contradiction he pointed out there was absolutely no basis for an armistice at present (a conviction which General Navarre expressed to me yesterday) except on terms that would allow Communists to take over Vietnam. A cease-fire and freezing of units on both sides would simply allow Communists to expand their infiltration of northern delta and other sections.

DeJean said that general thinking in Paris is that Laniel Government will not be continued in office after Presidential elections and betting seemed to be that successor Cabinet would be a Pinay–Mendes-France one. Either man might be Premier and other would take over Portfolio of Finance. He said he is not worried by this prospect as Mendes-France's thinking has come a long way since he called for an armistice last June. He feels sure that if Mendes-France were to head AS [*Fr*] Government it would have to continue the fight and the Navarre plan in face of impossibility of making any armistice which would not be a sell-out to Communists. At same time, DeJean said he did not like Mendes-France's general views on IC but thought they were susceptible of change. He made suggestion that it would be well for our Embassy to cultivate contacts with Mendes-France and help bring him along to a correct view of situation here.

With regard to French Presidential elections, he said that feeling when he left Paris was that it would be almost impossible for any candidate to get an absolute majority and in face of such situation Auriol might step forward for a second term and would be, DeJean felt, re-elected.

DeJean had had a long briefing by Navarre and felt extremely encouraged by military situation. Navarre expressed himself much as he did in my last talk with him (see my telegram 968, December 5) and felt quite certain that Viet Minh would attack Dien Bien Phu where they would meet, he was quite confident, a costly repulse.

DeJean saw Tam briefly at airport today when latter returned from seeing Bao Dai at Ban Methuot. He remarked that Tam, who had left Paris in a very optimistic frame of mind believing that while there would be a reshuffle (remaniement) of Cabinet he would continue to head government, seemed very "out of countenance" on his return from Ban Methuot. Tam avoided direct questions as to what Bao Dai had said to him and DeJean believes that while Bao Dai did not definitely inform Tam of his impending dismissal, he probably intimated it very strongly.

DeJean is seeing Bao Dai tomorrow[1] and I have appointment to see Tam.

HEATH

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[1] In telegram 996 from Saigon, Dec. 10, Ambassador Heath reported that Dejean had been relieved and satisfied with his conversation with Bao Dai. According to Dejean, Bao Dai understood that France was not going to relax its military effort and that negotiations to define French–Vietnamese relations must not be delayed. Bao Dai had also indicated that he intended to name a new government within a few days. (651.51G/12–1053)

751G.00/12–953 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 9, 1953—9 a. m.

987. Repeated information Paris 285, Hanoi unnumbered. General Navarre told me today that he spent week-end with Bao Dai at Banmethuot and found HM rather discouraged. He had done his best, with some success, to improve Bao Dai's morale but told Bao Dai very bluntly that, while he could count on French troops fighting with their present spirit and success in immediate future, Bao Dai must not delay in negotiating terms of future Franco-Vietnamese association. He said to Bao Dai that everybody in Vietnam seemed to take it for granted that basic accords that Vietnam signed with French in 1949 were obsolete, but nothing was being done on Vietnamese side to negotiate new ones. It should be easily possible to arrive at some new basis acceptable to France and Vietnam. If things continued as they were, they were bound to have some eventual deleterious effect on French troop morale. French soldier was willing to fight and die, but he wanted to see a very definite French interest involved. Bao Dai reportedly replied that he could hardly begin negotiations until after French presidential elections, to which Navarre replied that that simply meant more delay.

HEATH

751G.00/12–953 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, December 9, 1953—noon.

333. Repeated information Saigon 247, Paris 147. Evacuation of civilians from Laichau was completed 7th, according Chief Political

Officer of Delegation Generale. Principal families were moved to Hanoi, others to Dien-Bien-Phu.

Status of Laichau, according to informant, is now fluid: If Viet Minh attack town, no effort will be made to hold it, but whenever Viet Minh are not present in force, Franco-Thai units will continue make such use of town and environs as may be desirable. No fixed defensive positions remain at Laichau.

As Dien-Bien-Phu passes from airborne to infantry phase, General Gilles, paratroop commander, is being relieved by Colonel De Castries, most recently in command of South zone of delta.[1]

Despite rumors heard widely in official and unofficial circles here, informant says he has not been able to authenticate reports that elements of Viet Minh Divisions 308 and 312 are moving to join Division 316 in Thai country. He adds that objectives of Division 316 itself are far from clear at this time.

STURM

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[1] In telegram 334 from Hanoi, Dec. 10, Sturm summarized his discussion of Dec. 9 with General Cogny, French commander in northern Vietnam, concerning the military situation. The telegram read in part as follows: "In assigning Colonel De Castries to command Dien-Bien-Phu Cogny gave job to best man for the purpose now available in Tonkin. An old cavalry man, De Castries can be depended on seize initiative and not remain behind defensive position (that is, not to create another Na San). Position at Dien-Bien-Phu is now strong and is being further strengthened continually." (751G.00/12–1053)

751H.5 MSP/12–1053 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 10, 1953—11 a. m.

997. For Bonsal. Although I do not wish to make final recommendations at this juncture, I invite your attention to Tousfo 587 December 7[1] setting forth proposed STEM programs for FOA/W approval in respect of Cambodia.

In present murky political atmosphere in Cambodia and given the King's reimposed self-exile, it is not possible to discern future trends of policy in that Kingdom. However, such evidence as we have suggests that trend toward neutralism is very strong. In my view, we should not give aid to Cambodia unless it is willing to stand up and be counted in the fight against Communism.

Although actual amount of our economic aid to Cambodia is not large, political fact remains that Cambodians see unusual numbers of

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[1] Not found in Department of State files.

STEM personnel led by the enthusiastic McReynolds.[3] This gives them inevitable impression that US Government is anxious to replace France as a principal supplier of Cambodian needs and, unlike France, free of obligations on part of Cambodia. Such a political atmosphere, particularly at time when Cambodian Government should address itself to serious problem of negotiating final independence with French Government, not conducive to furtherance of our policy in Indochina.

A further consideration is fact that, if Cambodians show irresponsible attitude or present extreme demands on France, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for Vietnamese and Laotians not to do likewise. In consequence, what Cambodia does assumes disproportionate importance throughout remainder of Indochina.

HEATH

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[3] Wilbur McReynolds, Director of the Foreign Operations Administration Mission in Indochina.

751G.00/12–1053 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 10, 1953—5 p. m.

999. Repeated information Paris 290, Hanoi unnumbered. Re Embtel 968, repeated information Paris 279.[1] De Jean said this morning French High Command is hopeful that a major engagement can be forced in vicinity of Dien-Bien-Phu in near future. He said General Navarre planned to withdraw from Laichau as it was indefensible with small force now manning garrison, but that he had almost a division, including two battalions of artillery, at Dien-Bien-Phu and was confident of victory if the two Vietnamese [*Viet Minh*] divisions—the 316th and 304th—now heading toward that place chose to give battle. Fact that enemy had sent two divisions toward Dien-Bien-Phu plus one regiment from forces northeast of delta was fairly convincing evidence that Viet Minh had been compelled by Navarre's tactics at least temporarily to give up intention of mounting a major offensive against delta which would have been made more formidable by guerrilla warfare inside delta. This De Jean felt was proof of Navarre's skill.

Commissioner General said that a meeting of Franco-Vietnamese high military committee will take place next week at Dalat in presence of Bao Dai to discuss forthcoming operations and future plans for strengthening of Vietnamese national army.

MCCLINTOCK

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[1] Dated Dec. 5, p. 899.

751G.00/12–1053 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 10, 1953—6 p. m.

1007. Sent Paris 294. We deeply appreciate Department's consideration in repeating Secto 24 as set forth Deptel 1014.[1]

Re Bidault's emphasis described first paragraph reference telegram on General Navarre's build-up of force strength and his reliance on US financial and material assistance, General Navarre has sent Ambassador a personal note enclosing a copy of a letter dated December 7 to General Trapnell in which he makes a spirited plea for no diminution of US end-item equipment during fiscal 1954.[2]

In Navarre letter to Ambassador, he says "you have been witness of my conversations with Vice President Nixon and Senators Knowland and Mansfield. All these eminent authorities have asked me if I was satisfied with American aid and have affirmed the desire of the US Government to aid us to the maximum." Letter to Trapnell emphasizes Navarre's growing concern that his requests for end-items have been materially scaled down by our defense authorities "which might well prevent realization of a dependable logistical system at very time that Battle Corps will be most actively engaged." Navarre stresses that on encouraging assurances from important visitors and in concert with our MAAG and General O'Daniel mission, he had increased his force strength and that if scaling down of end-item program is insisted upon by Pentagon, there will be an obvious discrepancy between means in personnel and means in matériel which he shall have at his disposal. If this takes place, "without any doubt I would be forced to reconsider operational plan anticipated for year 1954."

Navarre concludes letter to Trapnell stressing necessity for firm information re supplies he will receive; an earnest request that reductions made by Washington be reconsidered; that he know when he will receive first FY–1954 equipment; and that he have assurances that actual deliveries of end-items will take place within next three months.

Full text being telegraphed by MAAG.

In view of success Navarre has attained in meeting his pledged program of operations, and in light of impact military success will have on political situation both here and in France, we urge that everything possible be done by Department of Defense to meet General Navarre's request.[3]

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[1] Secto 24 is dated Dec. 7, p. 901. Telegram 1014 is not printed.

[2] The note from General Navarre to Ambassador Heath, Dec. 7, and a letter from Chargé McClintock to General Navarre acknowledging receipt, were transmitted in despatch 230 from Saigon, Dec. 14, not printed. (751G.5/12–1453) The letter from General Navarre to General Trapnell, transmitted to Washington via military channels, is not printed here. (Department of Defense files)

McClintock

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[3] In a letter of Dec. 14, General Trapnell assured General Navarre that the army, navy, and air force aid programs for FY 1954 which had been approved substantially fulfilled French requests and that deliveries could be expected soon. General Trapnell's letter was transmitted with despatch 233 from Saigon, Dec. 16. (751G.5/12-1653) In telegram 1110 from Saigon, Dec. 27, Ambassador Heath reported that according to General Trapnell, who had met with General Navarre that day, the worries of the latter regarding possible suspension or delay in the delivery of U.S. military equipment had ended. (751G.00/12-2753)

751G.00/12-1253: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 12, 1953—3 p. m.

1014. Sent Paris 296. In continuation of his increasingly open struggle to remain in office, Tam last night undertook nationwide radio broadcast on eve of his departure this morning for Dalat to confer with Bao Dai.

Prime Minister said it was matter of highest urgency to create government of national union which would be able to represent Vietnam in forthcoming negotiations with France "and in eventual discussions with Ho Chi-Minh". Appealing to all to submerge partisan feeling and to join in true national cooperation, Tam stressed "ardent desire for peace of our people bloodied by a too-long conflict" and fact that in Paris he felt same desire for peace of French people who had made such heavy sacrifices in aiding Vietnam. He added, "If Ho Chi-Minh is sincere (and there is only between 5 and 10 percent of chance in favor of this daring hypothesis) we will not say no in advance to hope (of peace). My compatriots who know me know that I am not a dreamer nor a capitulator. I am proud, on contrary, of being fighter at all times who does not lay down arms until objective is achieved. From this point of view you can trust me: Enemy will not outmaneuver us."

Tam concluded with appeal for a national assembly. He said, "Finally, I wish to say that I understand and share general desire of our compatriots to obtain free democratic representation. Popular common sense was shown in convincing manner at time of municipal and later provincial elections. Why should it be lacking in event of legislative elections? We need a national assembly in confronting prospectives which are before us."

Tam has thus grasped nettle of almost overt opposition to Bao Dai. Latter, in view of fiasco of his own recent national congress, can scarcely contemplate with enthusiasm prospect of an election for national assembly. Likewise Tam's appeal for a government of national union, impliedly with himself at its head, is not calculated to arouse great support from chief of state, who himself desires to be symbol of national union.

Issues between Tam and Bao Dai are rapidly drawing to a head, and we expect they should be resolved this week-end in Dalat.[1]

DeJean has invited me to be his house guest at Dalat, and I plan to fly there tomorrow, returning Monday.[2]

McClintock

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[1] In telegram 1047 from Saigon, Dec. 17, Chargé McClintock reported that the Vietnamese Imperial Cabinet had that morning announced the resignation of the government of Nguyen Van Tam. (751G.13/12–1753) The Embassy transmitted a detailed analysis of the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Premier Tam in despatch 242, Dec. 17. (751G.13/12–1753)

[2] Dec. 14.

751G.00/12–1253 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 12, 1953—4 p. m.

1016. Sent Paris 297; repeated information Vientiane, Phnom Penh, Hanoi unnumbered. During course of my conversation this morning with Laotian Prime Minister, he made following points:

1. Political and military situation of Laos had materially improved of recent months. This was due to two factors: (1) Success of Laotian military build-up backstopped by MDAP assistance and French Union cadres, which was now paying off in terms of actual successful military operations against Viet Minh; (2) actual spelling out of Laotian independence in recently signed Franco-Laotian treaty which gave Laos a distinctly stronger political position internationally than it had before.

2. Prince Souvanna Phouma was deeply concerned, however, at economic fragility of his country. He said, "we are building a nation from its foundations, whereas in Vietnam and even Cambodia the economic system has long been established and there is a very considerable investment of French and other capital in the economic machine". Prime Minister emphasized basic poverty of his country and extraordinary charges placed on so weak an economy by fact of war. He likewise pointed to disastrous effects of devaluation which, by raising cost of imported commodities, had made it necessary for him to cut his program of public works in half.

3. Prime Minister said that tentatively he planned to attend quadripartite economic conference early in January at Paris to discuss continuation or modification of existing financial and economic agreements. He expressed some doubt, however, if conference could be held on schedule in view of uncertainty re Cambodian attitude. He said recent dismissal of Cambodian foreign minister provided no ground for optimism that (*a*) Cambodians knew really what they wanted or

(*b*) that they would, once they found out what they wanted, come in to join economic and financial system with Vietnam and Laos.

4. Prime Minister commented bitterly that not only had Vietnamese Government refused to pay Cambodians their share (16 percent) of this year's customs receipts for all of Indochina, but had likewise not paid Laos its 7 percent. He said Vietnamese Government had offered no excuse for this failure to meet its obligations to the other two Associated States.

Prince Souvanna Phouma returns to Vientiane tomorrow.

McCLINTOCK

751G.00/12–1253 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, December 12, 1953—5 : 33 p. m.
PRIORITY

2174. In view impending Commie Indochina peace campaign on occasion Dec 19 anniversary[2] resulting recent WFTU resolution as well as possible future developments Ho Chi Minh so-called offer negotiate Indochina, we are considering what should be our position in order counter patent propaganda maneuver and place Ho "offer" in true light for audiences Indochina, France, elsewhere. Should of course bear in mind possibility Ho reply French Dec 2 communiqué through official channels. USIS Saigon reports local reaction "unbelieving" re apparent lack of US policy Ho interview; suggests we take publicity line to counter apathy which may follow false hope satisfactory armistice, but cautions against Commie counterpropaganda line that while French willing consider negotiations U.S. insists they and Vietnamese continue fight.

Unless French take lead in discrediting Ho "offer" Dept realizes difficult take line inoffensive to them and free of charge U.S. taking lead. However, following line suggests self:

(1) Peg our approach on anticipated Dec 19 Commie propaganda campaign and possible other future moves as coordinated maneuver Commie high command to divide and confuse; (2) Without making categorical statements, raise doubts and questions sincerity, purpose, timing, ultimate authorship Ho "offer"; (3) Indicate French communiqué calls Ho's hand and assures solidarity with Associated States; (4) Suggest Ho move dictated by military weakness and desire gain time; (5) Give heavier play Indochina than France.

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[1] Drafted by Richard A. Poole, public affairs officer, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 1050 and repeated for information to Moscow and London.

[2] For Ho Chi Minh's Appeal on the Occasion of the Seventh Anniversary of the Nationwide Resistance War, Dec. 19, 1953, see Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, vol. III, pp. 429–432.

Request soonest your views whether some such approach would be desirable and if so your suggestions re precise line and your recommendation whether should be by official statement here and/or USIA media play, in order that Dept may consider further action and give appropriate policy guidance USIA.[3] Suggest Paris and Saigon not consult French and Vietnamese authorities in order avoid prejudging of possible US action.

SMITH

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[3] In telegram 1037 from Saigon, Dec. 15, Chargé McClintock cautioned that any move of the type suggested by the Department of State be handled with care since the armistice issue was a sensitive matter in both Vietnamese internal politics and in Vietnamese–French relations. (751G.00/12–1553) Telegram 2299 from Paris, Dec. 15, read in part as follows:

"Although Embassy fully appreciates Department's wish to place 'Ho offer in true light for audiences Indochina, France, elsewhere' we cannot emphasize too strongly that effective way impede this purpose in France is for US official information agencies to embark on active publicity campaign designed berate Ho *démarche.* Any such campaign would tend to further widespread impression here that US pulling strings more and more in Indochina (which even those who realize why resent) and would lend credence to existing suspicion that France staying on in Indochina and [*sic*] because US has bought her services (pushed by Communists as French bodies for American dollars, etc)." (751G.00/12–1553)

751G.00/12–1553 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, December 15, 1953—3 p. m.

1035. Sent Paris 306. No distribution outside Department. During Streibert's[1] visit with Dejean, former told Commissioner General that possibly delay in furnishing 1954 arms program to General Navarre on which latter had protested (Embtel 1007, repeated Paris 294)[2] might be due to fact that Washington was waiting for France join EDC.

This is first time any responsible American official has suggested here that our policy in helping French and Vietnamese win war in Indochina is contingent on ratification by French of EDC.

Yesterday Dejean reverted to Streibert's comment and added that on basis of his recent visit to Paris, he did not think chances of France's ratifying EDC were very bright. Dejean said he had seen instructions which French Government had prepared for Laniel and Bidault at Bermuda and had definite impression that Laniel Government was not in a position to bring this matter to a successful issue. Dejean offered as his own comment possibility that, in lieu of ratification EDC, it might be possible to accomplish a limited German rearmament within framework of NATO.[3]

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[1] Theodore C. Streibert, Director of the U.S. Information Agency, on visit in Indochina.

[2] Dated Dec. 10, p. 918.

McClintock

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[3] In telegram 1058 to Saigon, Dec. 15, the Department of State instructed McClintock to confirm to Dejean, on an urgent basis, that the United States policy of providing arms to France for use in Indochina remained based on the importance of the area to the free world and not on French ratification of EDC. (751G.00/12-1553) In telegram 1048 from Saigon, Dec. 17, McClintock reported that Dejean had been most pleased at the receipt of the substance of telegram 1058. (751G.00/12-1753)

In telegram Secto 10 from Paris, Dec. 16, Secretary Dulles (at Paris for the 12th Session of the NATO Council, Dec. 14-16) reported that in his press conference of Dec. 15 he had stated that the U.S. commitment to France for FY 1954 Indochina aid was a firm understanding unrelated to French action on EDC. (751G.5 MSP/12-1653)

751G.00/12-1753 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, December 17, 1953—4 p. m.

1045. Sent Paris 312; repeated information Hanoi and Phnom Penh unnumbered. I lunched yesterday with Prince Savang in Laos and later called on Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma at Vientiane. I asked both Princes what Laotian attitude would be toward a negotiated armistice in Indochina and was disturbed when both calmly replied that once Viet Minh withdrew from Laotian territory, further conduct of war and its conclusion was of no concern to Laos.

At luncheon conversation with Savang it was not possible to refute his proposition, but later with Prime Minister I energetically dissented from this point of view. I said in light of new international status Laos following signature of conventions with France, fact that Laotian Government last spring had sought even though unsuccessfully to bring Viet Minh invasion before UN, from aspect of Laotian self interest it essential that Laos be a signatory of whatever arrangement brought hostilities to a conclusion in Indochina. Prince Souvanna Phouma, after consideration, said he agreed with this line of reasoning, and I likewise sought to leave no doubt in mind of Foreign Minister that Laos could not simply let the Viet Minh depart and wash its hands of further developments in Indochina involving conduct of war here.

McClintock

INR-NIE files

Special Estimate

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 18 December 1953.

SE 53

PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO CERTAIN POSSIBLE US COURSES OF ACTION IN INDOCHINA THROUGH 1954[1]

THE PROBLEM*

To estimate the probable reactions of Communist China and the USSR to:

a. The commitment in Indochina, before the end of 1954, of US ground, air, and naval forces on a scale sufficient to defeat decisively the field forces of the Viet Minh.

b. The commitment in Indochina, before the end of the 1954, of US ground, air, and naval forces on a scale sufficient to hold the Viet Minh in check until such time as US-developed Vietnamese forces could decisively defeat the field forces of the Viet Minh.

ASSUMPTIONS*

For both *a.* and *b.* above:

1. No Chinese Communist intervention in force in Indochina had taken place.

2. Commitment of US forces had been publicly requested by the French and Vietnamese governments.

3. At the time of the US commitment French Union forces still retained essentially their present position in the Tonkin Delta.

4. Communist China and the USSR would have prior knowledge of the US intent to commit its forces in Indochina.

5. Following the US commitment, there would be a phased withdrawal of French forces from Indochina.

6. US will warn the Chinese Communists that if they openly intervene† in the fighting in Indochina, the US will not limit its military action to Indochina.

ESTIMATE

1. We believe that the Communists would assume that the purpose of committing US forces in Indochina was the decisive defeat of the Viet Minh. Consequently, we believe that Communist reactions to such

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[1] According to a note on the cover sheet, "The Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 15 December 1953. The FBI abstained, the subject being outside of its jurisdiction. The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff."

*The Problem and the Assumptions have been provided to the intelligence community as a basis for the estimate. [Footnote in the source text.]

†For the purposes of this estimate, open intervention is defined as the commitment of substantial Chinese Communist combat forces, under any guise. [Footnote in the source text.]

a US commitment would be substantially the same whether it were designed to defeat the Viet Minh with U.S. forces (Problem *a.*) or eventually with US-trained Vietnam forces (Problem *b.*).

In the Event of a Pending US Commitment

2. We do not believe that Communist China, upon learning of a forthcoming commitment by the US, would immediately intervene openly with substantial forces in Indochina. The acceptance by Communist China of an armistice in Korea, its policies to date with respect to Indochina, and its present emphasis on domestic problems seem to indicate a desire at this time to avoid open intervention in the Indochina war or expansion of the conflict to Communist China. US warnings against Chinese Communist intervention in force‡ probably would have a strong deterrent effect. Moreover, the political advantage to be gained by portraying the US as an "aggressor" would probably appear both to Communist China and the USSR to outweigh the military advantage of moving large Chinese Communist forces into Indochina before the arrival of US forces.

3. In addition, Communist leadership would probably estimate that they would have time to take a number of steps which, without a serious risk of expanding the war to China, might deter a US military commitment or seriously impair its effectiveness. Such steps might include:

a. Increasing logistic and rear area support to the Viet Minh.

b. Covertly committing Chinese troops to operate as "Viet Minh guerrillas."

c. Encouraging intensified Viet Minh guerrilla and sabotage operations in Indochina, particularly in and around the Tonkin Delta, designed to inflict such damage on the French Union position as to increase the difficulties of the US operation.

d. Building up Chinese Communist strength in south China, including Hainan.

e. Seeking by diplomatic and propaganda means in the UN and elsewhere to forestall US action, to gain the support of non-Communist countries, and to exploit differences between the US and its allies over preparations for this operation.

f. Concluding a defense pact with the Viet Minh.

Although, in response to a US military commitment in Indochina, the Communists might threaten to renew hostilities in Korea, we believe that they would not actually take such action as they probably estimate that renewed aggression in Korea would result in expanding the conflict to Communist China itself.

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‡Such warnings would reinforce the warning already given by Secretary of State Dulles, in his American Legion Speech at St. Louis, 2 September 1953:

"Communist China has been and now is training, equipping and supplying the Communist forces in Indochina. There is the risk that, as in Korea, Red China might send its own army into Indochina. The Chinese Communist regime should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined in Indochina. I say this soberly in the interest of peace and in the hope of preventing another aggressor miscalculation." [Footnote in the source text.]

Actual US Commitment

4. In the initial stages of an actual US military commitment, the Communists might not feel compelled to intervene openly in force immediately. They would recognize the difficulties which the US forces would face in operating in the Indochina climate and terrain. They would also realize that the xenophobia of the indigenous population of Indochina might be effectively exploited to the disadvantage of US forces by Communist propaganda; the Chinese Communists would therefore prefer that the US rather than themselves be confronted with this antiforeign attitude. They might estimate that, with increased aid from Communist China, the Viet Minh forces, by employing harassing and infiltrating tactics and avoiding major engagements, could make any US advance at the least slow and difficult. It is probable, therefore, that the Chinese Communists would initially follow a cautious military policy while they assessed the scale, nature, and probable success of the US action, the effect of such action on Vietnamese national morale and military capabilities, the subsequent military and political moves of the French, the temper of US opinion, the reactions of US allies and the neutralist states, and the position of the UN. Even at this early stage, however, the Chinese Communists would probably take strong actions short of open intervention in an effort to prevent the US from destroying the Viet Minh armed forces.§

5. In addition to the steps outlined in paragraph 3 above, the Chinese Communists, at this early stage of US commitment, would probably provide an increased number of military advisors, possibly including commanders for major Viet Minh units. Moreover, Peiping might covertly furnish limited air support for Viet Minh ground forces, but would be unlikely to undertake air operations which it estimated would provoke US retaliation against Communist China itself other than retaliation against those airfields from which such air attacks were launched.

6. If the leaders of Communist China and the USSR came to believe that a protracted stalemate in Indochina was likely, they would probably not openly commit Chinese Communist ground, naval, or air forces to an intervention in force in Indochina, nor would they renew hostilities in Korea or commit new acts of armed aggression elsewhere

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§The Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, believes that the timing of the Communist reaction to the commitment of US forces in Indochina cannot be estimated with any degree of assurance. He therefore believes that a decision by the Communists to follow a cautious policy in the initial stages of the US action should be presented as a possibility, rather than as a probability. [Footnote in the source text.]

in the Far East. Peiping and Moscow would probably believe that a long and indecisive war in Indochina could be exploited politically and that, in time, US and Vietnamese will to fight might be worn down.

7. If at any time, however, the leaders of Communist China and the USSR came to believe that a decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces was likely, they would be faced with the decision whether Communist China should intervene openly in force in order to avert this development.

8. The following considerations might induce the Communists to decide in favor of open intervention in force:

a. Decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces would be a grave blow to Communist prestige throughout the world and would seriously diminish prospects for the expansion of Communism in Asia.

b. A US military commitment in Indochina might form part of a larger plan, possibly involving, in the minds of the Communists, the resurgence of Chinese Nationalist strength, aimed at the destruction of the Chinese Communist regime. In any case, decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces would bring US power to the borders of China.

c. Whatever the initial intention, successful US military action in Indochina might encourage the US to increase pressure on other points of the Communist periphery.

d. Many observers, particularly in the Asian neutralist states, would consider the US in the wrong in Indochina and would condone Chinese Communist intervention as a move to "liberate Indochina from American imperialism." These sentiments could be effectively exploited by Communist propaganda.

e. The US, despite its warnings, might not retaliate strongly against Communist China, because it would fear that such retaliation would alienate its NATO allies, result in wider military deployment of US forces, cause Peiping to invoke the Sino-Soviet treaty, and thereby increase the danger of general war.

f. By intervening openly in force the Chinese Communists might be able to prevent indefinitely both the successful accomplishment of the US mission and the disengagement of substantial US forces from Indochina.

9. On the other hand, the following considerations might deter the Communists from deciding to intervene openly in force:

a. It would be more important to concentrate upon domestic problems including strengthening of Communist China's economy.

b. There would be a grave risk of US reprisals against Communist China and possibly of general war.

c. Indochina is remote from the USSR and the centers of power in Communist China. Accordingly, the establishment of a strong US position in Indochina would not constitute, to the same degree as in Korea, a threat to Chinese Communist and Soviet power in the Far East.

d. Short of actual intervention, the Chinese Communists could acquire a position of strength by reinforcing and rehabilitating the military facilities on Hainan. This position would dominate the Gulf of

Tonkin, and pose a distinct threat to sea-air lines of communications of US forces in Indochina and to rear bases.

e. The loss in prestige involved in the defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces could in part be offset by depicting the Viet Minh as an indigenous liberation movement. Moreover, the Viet Minh Government and its armed forces could be preserved on Chinese soil where they could exercise constant military and political pressure on the forces of the US and the Associated States.

f. The military and political nature of the Indochina war is such that even if the US defeated the Viet Minh field forces, guerrilla action could probably be continued indefinitely and preclude the establishment of complete non-Communist control over that area.

g. Under such circumstances, the US might have to maintain a military commitment in Indochina for years to come. Heavy US commitments in Indochina over the long run might cause concern to US allies and might create divergencies between the US and neutralist states.

10. The Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believe that the Communist reaction to commitment of US forces in Indochina would largely depend upon US posture prior to, and at the same time of, such commitment. If the US posture made manifest to the Communists that US naval and air retaliatory power would be fully applied to Communist China, then Peiping and Moscow would seek to avoid courses of action which would bring about such retaliation. In such circumstances, the chances are better than even that the Chinese Communists would not openly intervene in Indochina, even if they believed that failure to intervene would mean the defeat at that time of the Viet Minh field forces in Indochina. Therefore the Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believe that in weighing the arguments set forth in paragraphs 8 and 9 Chinese Communist leaders, in such circumstances, would estimate that it was more advantageous to them to support a guerrilla action in Indochina and tie down large US forces in such a war, than to risk US retaliatory action against China itself which open intervention would involve. However, the Communists would almost certainly continue to support the remnants of the Viet Minh, including re-equipping these remnant forces on the Chinese side of the border and possibly augmenting them with Chinese "volunteers" so that Viet Minh resistance could be continued indefinitely. Moreover, they would pursue their objectives in the rest of Southeast Asia by all means short of open military intervention.

11. The Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, the Director of Naval Intelligence, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–2, Intelligence, Department of the Army, and the Director of Intelligence, USAF, believe that the condition of "decisive defeat of the field forces of the Viet Minh" prescribed for considering this prob-

lem would necessarily result in such a serious setback to Communist prestige, security, and expansionism as to lead to the following conclusions. In weighing the arguments presented in paragraphs 8 and 9, the Communist leaders in both Peiping and Moscow would probably give greatest consideration to: (*a*) the loss of prestige, the threat to Bloc security, and the setback to Communist expansionism in Southeast Asia involved in a decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces and, (*b*) the risk of direct US action against Communist China. To the Communists, the consequences of the decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces would be both certain and far reaching. In appraising the possible nature and scale of direct US action against the China mainland, the Communists would weigh any US warnings of probable consequences of intervention, the temper of US and free world opinion, and the probable US desire not to expand a local action. It is unlikely that the Communists' appraisal would lead them to the conviction that the US reaction to their intervention in Indochina would take the form of extensive and intense warfare against Communist China. In any case, their overriding suspicion of the ultimate motive of US forces in strength on or near the borders of Communist China would strongly influence their courses of action. Thus, the thought foremost in their minds would most probably be that failure to dislodge US military forces from the Chinese border would lead to increasing challenges to Communist power elsewhere. We therefore believe that the chances are probably better than even that the Communists would accept the risk involved and that the Chinese Communists would intervene openly and in force in an effort to save the Communist position in Indochina.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 177th Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, December 23, 1953 [1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

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About Indochina we must talk optimistically; we have put good money in, and we must stick by it. However, the pessimistic side will be spoken here. The Communists have a sense of history, and time is on their side. The Communist liberation army, or whatever, may have suffered military defeat by the spring of 1955, but we should not base our policies on the assumption that the Communist movement, and the necessity for us to put in very large sums of money to deal with it, will have been dissipated by that time. We will have a situation like that in Malaya, only on a greater scale, for many years—just as long as there is an aggressive China on the border. The key to Indochina is China. If China withdrew its support, the local Communists would not last three months. A present military defeat of the Communists does not mean that the problem cannot again be stirred up by the Chinese.

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[1] This memorandum was prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the NSC, on Dec. 24. At this meeting, Vice President Richard M. Nixon reported on his recent trip to the Far East, South Asia, and the Near East. The extract printed here constitutes the remarks of the Vice President on Indochina. On Dec. 23, Nixon reported to the nation on his trip over national radio and television. For his comments on Indochina, see Department of State *Bulletin*, Jan. 4, 1954, p. 12. On Jan. 8, 1954, Nixon briefed certain officers of the Department of State on the areas which he had visited, including Indochina. The transcript of that briefing is in file 033.1100 NI/1-1854.

I have no illusions about the training program there; it is not going well. General Trapnell and others say that the training program, at the present level and at the present rate, will not succeed. The French Generals simply have no confidence in independent units of natives, and the natives don't want to fight under French leaders. The reason the French earlier had success was that the previous French commander (De Lattre de Tassigny) had faith in the Vietnamese. This the present commander does not have. Another point related to metropolitan France is the fear that the war will be settled in Paris. The effect on morale will be serious when the negotiation talks take place. We have no real leaders in Vietnam. Malcolm MacDonald thinks a great deal of Bao Dai, that he may become a great leader, and that he is not a stooge of the French. General Templer was asked about Indochina, what do they need? He said, "I hate to admit this, because he's a real S.O.B., but what they need there is a Rhee."

There are factors on the plus side, and matters could be worse. The Navarre plan is a tremendous improvement. Navarre said we could expect military reversals, but there have not been as many as were expected. The French troop morale is excellent, a lot better than realized. The French are giving the Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese real independence in the French Union. They are doing this in fact, but not selling the idea by propaganda to the people.

To sum up: There is a definite need to stiffen the French at home. I am convinced in my own mind that what happens in Indochina is more important, from the standpoint of strategic interests of Europe, than what happens in Korea. When you consider military and economic aid, doubts should be resolved in favor of this. Navarre is getting everything he needs, he says. If all our eggs are in one basket, it won't do any good to put in eight hundred million dollars unless the military people on the scene, and outside advisers, are convinced, on the basis of what is sent, that that is enough to do the job, as well as having enough men to do the job. Navarre indicated that the problem, from his standpoint, was not equipment, but men. This brings up the problem of training Vietnamese. The French resent suggestions that their training tactics could be improved on. We should try to convince the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians that they will have and can have independence within the French Union. They realize that if the French get out the Communists will take over. They want to stay within the Union, but also have the feeling that they have not as yet been offered full independence. An offer of independence within the Union might be helpful in selling the idea.

Bao Dai's thinking is of interest, because it indicates his ability to analyze the dangers. He said, "I am opposed to negotiation for four reasons: One, the Communists (we can knock off that reason because of disagreement); two, what can we do? If we divide the country, we will eventually lose; three, if we invite the enemy into the conference we will lose; and four, we can invite these people in and continue as a minority party." If there is negotiation now, the only thing that will result is Communist domination. If the French get out, the only capable leadership at the present time in Vietnam is Communist leadership. The anti-Communist Vietnamese leadership is not built up to this point, and the Communists are stronger militarily. Negotiation should not take place until the Vietnamese power and leadership is built up. The problem is to find a way to handle the negotiation talks, and to prosecute the war. In conclusion, I am convinced that negotiation at the present time would be disastrous.

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Secretary's Letters, lot 56 D 459

Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright) to the Secretary of State

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] December 26, 1953.

Subject: Renewed Invasion of Laos

The Situation

Over the past few days, there have been indications of a renewed Viet Minh invasion of Laos.[1] According to press reports, that invasion has now taken place in considerable force (there may be more than one division of enemy troops involved). The immediate target is central Laos rather than northern Laos as was the case last April. As of 10:00 a. m. Saturday morning, December 26, the following are the known elements of the situation according to press and radio reports:

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[1] The numerous early reports and analysis of the invasion from Saigon, Vientiane, Bangkok, and Hanoi are largely located in file 751J.00. Bonsal addressed briefing memoranda on the subject to Drumright on Dec. 24 (751G.00/12–2453) and Dec. 30 (751G.5/12–3053). In telegram MG 2117 to the Army Chief of Staff via CINCPAC, Dec. 29, General Trapnell, Chief of MAAG Saigon, stated that the initiative was now clearly in the hands of the Viet Minh. (751G.5/12–2953) In a memorandum of Dec. 29 to Robert Bowie, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Edmund Gullion of S/P stated that the invasion was not a serious threat to the overall French military position, but that it could be countered only at a heavy cost to the French strategic reserve and at the expense of operations elsewhere. (PPS files, lot 64 D 563, "Gullion") The invasion was discussed inconclusively at the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting of Dec. 23 (Secretary's Staff Meetings, lot 63 D 75), and at the 178th Meeting of the National Security Council on Dec. 30 (Memorandum of discussion, Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file). Regarding the initial French reaction, see telegram 2425 from Paris, Dec. 28, *infra*.

(1) French Union forces have evacuated and the enemy has occupied Thakkek on the Mekong River, directly across from Thailand. This means the cutting of land and perhaps also river communications between Northern and Southern Laos. It does not pose an immediate threat to the capitals of Laos (Luang Prabang and Vientiane). Vientiane is over 400 kilometers up stream from Thakkek. The nearest French Union base of any importance is at Seno which is some 80 kilometers south of Thakkek. It is understood that this position has been reinforced recently.

(2) The Laotian Prime Minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma has broadcast an appeal to "the conscience, the judgment of all the free nations" and has stated that "the Laotian Government with the help of its friends, shall employ all its forces with unfaltering will to safeguard the integrity, liberty and independence of the Kingdom". The statement states that the invasion is to "impose the communist ideology upon a people which refuses it and will always refuse it."

(3) According to the radio, the Thai Government has declared a state of emergency in its northern provinces. The Thai Ambassador here has indicated to Mr. Landon this morning that he expects instructions from his government to approach the U.N. regarding the developing threat to Thailand.

(4) According to the radio, the Moscow Radio has denounced Thailand for "interfering in the Indochina war on behalf of the United States."

We have been in touch with the Laotian Minister and with the French Embassy here this morning. They have had no information from their governments.

The decisions which face the Department are the following:

(1) Whether to make any public statements regarding the renewed invasion of Laos. You made a statement on May 1, 1953 (Press Release No. 238 attached).[2] We could draw attention of press to this statement as indicating our continuing attitude. We should probably not make a further formal statement at least until the French Government has made a statement. We might consider the possibility of a message from the President or from yourself to the Laotian King or Prime Minister assuring them of continued support etc.[3] (There is no

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[2] For text of the press release, see telegram 2116 to Saigon, May 2, p. 536.

[3] At his press conference of Dec. 29, Secretary Dulles addressed the matter of the Viet Minh penetration of Laos. He stated that it was his impression that public accounts had exaggerated the seriousness of the situation, that the invasion should not upset the timetable of General Navarre, and Viet Minh "peace feelers" had not been affected since they had not been sincere in the first place. For text of Dulles' remarks on the subject, contained in Press Release No. 678, Dec. 29, see Department of State *Bulletin*, Jan. 11, 1954, p. 43.

For text of a note handed to the Ambassador of Laos on Dec. 29, see telegram 13 to Vientiane, Dec. 30 p. 935.

indication as yet of any emergency as regards military supplies.)

(2) Whether again to take up with the French, as you did last April, the question of placing the invasion of Laos before the U.N. You will recall that Mr. Bidault strongly opposed such a move at that time. We should in the near future receive some indication of present French thinking on the subject. A Laotian appeal to the U.N. with French support has seemed highly desirable to us. The French have, however, been unconvinced of its advantages and highly sensitive to the criticism of French "colonial" policies which might ensue without producing any concrete help for France or Laos from the U.N.

(3) Whether to take any position regarding a possible appeal to the U.N. by Thailand on the basis of the possible threat to the Thai peace and security resulting from the invasion of Laos. You will recall that the Thais, in part with our encouragement, were on the verge last spring of making such an appeal but did not do so when the invaders seemed to be withdrawing from the advanced position they had reached in Laos. The French were strongly opposed to any such appeal by the Thais and were resentful of the encouragement they believed we had given the Thais. Under the circumstances, and pending a clarification of the Thai and French attitudes, there is probably no position we can usefully take in this matter other than to recommend informally to the Thais and the French and the Laotians that they exchange views before reaching decisions in the matter. (A Thai appeal to the U.N. without suitable French and Laotian support might well prove of little positive value and might on the other hand focus attention on some of the weaker facets in the free world position in Southeast Asia generally.)

751G.5/12-2853 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Joyce) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, December 28, 1953—8 p. m.

2425. Repeated information Saigon 245. Foreign Office official stated following today on basis telegram received from DeJean who accompanied Navarre Savannakhet December 27:

1. Viet Minh drive across Laos to Thakhek of limited military significance. Do not consider it as posing any serious threat Savannakhet since only eight or nine Viet Minh battalions involved in "raid" and in view length supply line and difficulties terrain. In meanwhile, Savannakhet being strongly reinforced. As far as claim Viet Minh have cut north-south ground communications, this of little import since military supply to north Laos (Luang Prabang and Vientiane) has been accomplished by air for some time. Viet Minh Laotian drive indicates they not in position now mount any large-scale offensive Tonkin Delta.

2. Consider Viet Minh drive as principally political move designed bring pressure on French Government and public on eve four-power conference[1] to negotiate. This connection, no official confirmation Ho

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[1] Reference is to the Four-Power Foreign Ministers Conference which convened at Berlin on Jan. 25, 1954. Regarding the conference, see editorial note, p. 997.

"peace offer" received as yet. Discount as unrealistic press speculation interpreting Viet Minh move as attempt create Korean-type division Indochina near Sixteenth Parallel. Viet Minh will probably establish contact sympathetic Vietnamese elements Thai border.

3. French position opposition internationalization Indochina conflict remains unchanged. If internationalized, consider this would only cause entry Chinese Communists. Laotians in agreement this score. French Government of opinion events will show no need consider internationalization conflict at this time.

Secretariat Associated States officials report following today:

1. On basis news available impossible form any military conclusions as yet. They remind us that offensive has been awaited since October 15 and fact that it should be directed toward Mekong not entirely unexpected. Although they do not seek belittle Viet Minh strength, they reassured by complete confidence in Navarre and his command organization as well as knowledge preparations to meet offensive have been extensive.

2. In their opinion possible but not likely that Ho peace feelers and offensive have been coordinated. Rather believe it fortuitous circumstance which is bound to serve Viet Minh psychologically and hamper Buu Loc's task of establishing government.

3. Secretariat is watching Siamese reaction with interest. They are conscious of possibility Siamese may raise matter in UN if Viet Minh are stupid enough to give them cause (i.e., violation Thai territory), which they doubt.

4. Officials deplored extreme sensitivity French public and press to any news from Indochina, particularly bad news. This reflected in sensational headlines and interpretations current French press. In fact whether offensive is serious or not will not really be known for at least week when true Viet Minh strength and objective become more evident and ability of French Union Command to bring men and matériel to area and put them into action is proved.

JOYCE

751G.00/12-2953 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL HANOI, December 29, 1953.

360. Repeated information Saigon 266, Paris 157. Re Deptel 367.[1] Governor Tri said yesterday current Viet Minh invasion of Laos has revived fears of Dai Viet party leaders that developing military situation may be so played up in France as to strengthen hand of those political elements receptive to Ho Chi Minh's proposal to negotiate settlement between French and Viet Minh. He remarked that while region embracing Thakhek and Savannakhet is rich in rice and could

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[1] Telegram 1121 to Saigon, repeated as 367 to Hanoi, Dec. 28, 1953, not printed. (751G.00/12-2853)

serve as useful Viet Minh base for further advances either north or south, immediate interest of its occupation by Viet Minh lies in fact that plausible, if specious, analogy to Korean 38th parallel can be suggested to minds of those abroad who are only vaguely aware that Indochina has for years been divided into series of controlled and non-controlled parcels. Tri and his associates fear that if Viet Minh succeed in consolidating positions along middle Mekong, while at same time carrying out in Thai country manoeuvres susceptible of spectacular propaganda treatment, and intensifying within Red River delta a guerrilla campaign which is already dangerous and hampering to French Union troops, the enemy may put himself in a position to appeal with deadly effect to a public opinion in France which his earlier peace-feelers (among other elements) have predisposed in favor of negotiation.

Tri sees no conceivable basis on which French (with or without National Government participation) could negotiate any settlement with Viet Minh except one which would deliver country, and ultimately all Indochina, into Communist hands. Governor asked what US view would be if problem should assume form he fears it may do. I attempted to reassure Tri that we would steadfastly oppose any development that would make Southeast Asia yet more vulnerable to Communist penetration, but he remains unconvinced that the position from which we shall resist French pressure to negotiate with Viet Minh has not been undermined by Panmunjom's negotiations.

STURM

751J.00/12-3053 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Legation at Vientiane[1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, December 30, 1953—3:48 p. m.

13. Secretary yesterday received Lao Minister and handed reply latter's note December 26 which transmitted text Souvanna Phouma declaration.[2] Text reply follows (complimentary opening omitted):

"Secretary of State would be most grateful if Minister would convey to Prime Minister expression his appreciation of clarity, conciseness and logic of declaration. U.S. fully aware of aims Communist imperialism as represented by Viet Minh, whose false claim to be allied with nationalism Laos now again effectively unmasked."

"Secretary of State takes opportunity reiterate determination U.S. Government continue its material assistance to armed forces French

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[1] Drafted by Getz of PSA. Repeated for information to Saigon as 1134 and Paris as 2340.

[2] Neither the Laotian note nor a record of the conversation between the Secretary of State and the Laotian Ambassador on Dec. 29 has been found in Department of State files. A briefing memorandum by Drumright to the Secretary regarding the conversation, Dec. 29, is in file 751J.00/12-2953.

Union including those Laos in their heroic fight against Communist aggression and imperialism. Secretary of State desires also reiterate his admiration of brave struggle being conducted by people of Laos under leadership Royal Government."

Decided here public release this text more appropriately done by Lao Government Vientiane. You therefore authorized tell Lao U.S. has no objection such action. Lao Minister here informed and agrees. Notify Department when release made.[3]

DULLES

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[3] In telegram 18 from Vientiane, Jan. 2, 1954, it was reported that the text had been published in Vientiane on Dec. 30.

PRELUDE TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, JANUARY-APRIL 1954: CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF THE FRENCH MILITARY POSITION; THE SIEGE OF DIEN BIEN PHU; THE QUESTION OF UNITED STATES INTERVENTION; THE SEARCH FOR UNITED ACTION

751G.00/1-354 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, January 3, 1954—9 a. m.

1151. Repeated information Paris 351, Hanoi unnumbered. Department pass Assistant Secretary Robertson and Admiral Radford at Pearl Harbor. I spoke with Navarre shortly after my return from Manila December 31. He expressed entire confidence in ultimate success of his military plan but admitted possibility of reverses in next weeks to come. He believed he could hold Dien Bien Phu which available intelligence indicates will be attacked ~~by Viet Minh~~ but admitted it was possible that Viet Minh might take it, remarking that Communist China was now furnishing 37 mm. ack-ack which could cause losses to French planes which hitherto have been able to bomb and strafe with impunity. Viet Minh now have been given tractors to move 105 cannon which could be moved up and placed on heights overlooking approach to Dien Bien Phu. The 37 mm. ack-ack could hamper or prevent French planes from putting such batteries out of commission.

Navarre said loss of Dien Bien Phu or even as many as 10 battalions of his battle corps would not prevent his moving on to eventual victory. Loss of 10 battalions in war of this size was not in itself important. However, the effect in France of such losses and series of reverses which might occur and even extend over several weeks or longer without compensating victories would be serious and might even cause some deterioration in morale of Franco-Vietnamese forces.

The cutting, only temporarily he hoped, of land and water communications with Vientiane and introduction now of 37 mm. anti-aircraft guns on Viet Minh side made role and task of his aviation all-important and very difficult. He, therefore, needed more planes (B-26 light bombers), pilots and maintenance crews. He inquired whether 12 C-119s now on brief loan and flown by French pilots could be flown by Americans on purely logistic missions to non-battle areas, thus freeing French pilots for combat and transport tasks. His deputy General Bodet was studying these questions and would consult with us following day.

Bodet saw General Trapnell, MAAG Chief, and me last night.

He said (*a*) he needed immediately 10 more B–26s to bring his two squadrons up to full strength and (*b*) later, if and when Paris furnished him additional pilots, an additional squadron of 25 B–26s; (*c*) he needed immediately and temporarily an American ground crew or crews to provide maintenance for two of his four C–47 transport squadrons which now must greatly increase operations and for one of his B–26 squadrons; (*d*) he would need additional mechanics later if he trained another squadron of B–26s; (*e*) he wanted American pilots to fly the 12 C–119s on supply tasks for a time in order to free French pilots for other missions and (*f*) infra-red photo equipment with American instructors for its use to spot heavily camouflaged gun emplacements, matériel depots and enemy troop and supply movements which take place only at night or under haze conditions.

He also asked for radar plane spotting equipment if small enough to use on his present planes and a small observation dirigible if latter could be delivered by plane to Dien Bien Phu.

General Trapnell agreed to recommend immediately all above items. As regards American pilots for temporary operation of C–119s, he would recommend CAT civilian pilots be furnished as they were last spring during first invasion of Laos until French pilots could be trained and sent. Trapnell assumes that CAT pilots would be readily available as they were last spring. If not, then Department and Defense would have to make policy decision whether American military pilots could be used on non-combat supply missions.

Trapnell leaves January 5 to consult with General Weyland C-in-C FEAF in Tokyo about continuing loan of C–119s and furnishing civilian pilots, ground crews and infra-red photo equipment requested.

HEATH

751G.5/1–454 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Joyce) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, January 4, 1954—6 p. m.

2478. Repeated information Saigon 250.

1. Foreign Office officials expressed confidence today re ultimate success French Union military forces IC but did not rule out possibility Viet Minh may achieve short-term military successes in coming weeks. Seriousness latter possibility lies in its impact French political situation. Although political situation France unexpectedly quiet this score at present, French position IC based on delicate balance which could be tipped in favor negotiated settlement by Viet Minh military successes although latter might prove to be of relatively short duration.

This connection, they do not rule out possibility of high-level approach in name Viet Minh to negotiate being made through country such as India or Indonesia in order create further difficulties. Consider possibility Laniel's retention post Prime Minister important in keeping situation in France re IC in hand. They stated Laniel sending Ambassador letter today making reference his (Laniel's) conversation President Eisenhower Bermuda[1] and raising French need for additional military assistance including B–26 aircraft (presumably along lines indicated Saigon telegram 1151, Paris 351 January 3). (Pertinent parts Laniel's letter will be telegraphed when received.)[2]

2. Re military situation, they stated principal threat directed against Dien Bien Phu with 316th Viet Minh division to North with elements 308th and 312th Viet Minh divisions reportedly moving westward to join 316th; however, still do not know whether Viet Minh will attack or bypass Dien Bien Phu. Also, still do not know Viet Minh intentions Thakhek region. Savannakhet–Seno area strongly fortified; however, intend dislodge Viet Minh from position on Mekong. Although not certain how many Viet Minh this region, do know that four Viet Minh battalions reached river (this basis for use figure by press) with one having been left on road near Lao border together with two other battalions in flanking positions. Five Viet Minh battalions were left in rear and reserve positions central Annam. Cutting river communications between Savannakhet and Vientiane not yet serious (as noted by press), although two weekly convoys carrying coal, equipment, etc., for river movement from Savannakhet to Vientiane have been stopped thus far. Be serious if situation continued beyond January; however, anticipate elimination Viet Minh Thakhek area by end January.

JOYCE

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[1] The conversation under reference has not been identified.

[2] A free translation of the letter from Premier Laniel to Ambassador Dillon, dated Dec. 30, 1953, is contained in telegram 2503 from Paris, Jan. 5, 1954, p. 942.

611.00/1–454

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State[1]

[Extract]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 4, 1954.

. . . .

Senator George brought up Indochina. He was greatly worried about that situation. He hopes that no effort will be made to get Congress' consent to sending in U.S. troops. We talked about possible sea and air activity, to which he did not seem seriously to object.

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[1] Drafted by Secretary Dulles.

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751G.5 MSP/1–554 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Joyce) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, January 5, 1954—8 p. m.

2502. Repeated information Saigon 255. Jacquet is incensed at what he regards as deformation of his comments on Indochina which are quoted in Joseph Alsop's January 4 *Washington Post* article (Deptel 2376 January 4).[1]

Jacquet's account of what actually transpired in interview is that Alsop forced question of what would be French reaction to sending of US troops to Indochina (under French command) stating, "I intend to force the hand of the American Government in this matter as the only means of saving the situation."

To the unexpected suggestion that US troops be sent to Indochina Jacquet replied that this was only one of many possible courses which might provide a solution to the Indochina impasse. Among others, he included (*a*) negotiating with Ho directly, (*b*) negotiating on an international plane either with Peking or as part of a four or five power conference, (*c*) placing the matter in the hands of the UN. He stated that in his opinion if French public opinion was not presented with precise plan of action for Indochina within the next three to six months pressure on the Assembly would be such that it would be unable to support any government which did not present the prospects for a prompt Indochina solution not excluding withdrawal as a last solution.

It is an apparent distortion of this statement which led Alsop to report that the National Assembly would insist on the recall of the French expeditionary force unless Allied reinforcements were provided within the next three to six months. The statement should have read according to Jacquet "within three to six months French public opinion will oblige the National Assembly to support only that government which can promise a solution to the Indochina problem even if the solution is withdrawal."

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[1] Telegram 2376 to Paris, Jan. 4, repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 1160, read as follows:

"Alsop column carried *Washington Post* January 4 entitled 'French Want More Help in Indochina' attributes to Jacquet statement National Assembly would insist on recall French Expeditionary force unless allied reinforcements provided 'within the next three to six months.' Article also ascribes to Bidault remark French Government would move to abandon Indochina struggle 'in a matter of weeks' unless American troops available. General tone article more pessimistic than recent reporting from Embassy Paris . . . and quotations from Jacquet and Bidault regarding American troops for Indochina are alarming. Department desires Embassy's estimate Alsop presentation urgently." (751G.5 MSP/1–454)

As for Bidault's statement that French Government would have to abandon Indochina in a matter of weeks unless American troops were made available, Jacquet reports this statement even more distorted. Bidault has been more opposed to American troop participation than any other member of the Cabinet and that as we know the policy of the French Government for years has been to seek all forms of American aid other than direct troop intervention.

Furthermore, Jacquet told Alsop that whatever is done on a political plane, the Indochina military position must be improved within the near future if the French Government is to gain support for any policy but withdrawal. As he pointed out this too has been said many times before.

Jacquet attributed Alsop's distortions of what was said to the latters emotional fervor and personal belief in the need for sending US troops. He quoted Alsop as saying that if US troops were sent to Indochina, he "wanted to take part in the campaign." Jacquet said that rather than seek his opinion, Alsop inflicted his own. He also described Alsop's French as being poor and admitted the possibility that this may have been a contributing cause to his misrepresentation. Foreign Office also referred this morning to Alsop's attempts to advance his own theories, rather than receive an account of French opinions.

We took pains to remind Jacquet as we had Foreign Office this morning of disastrous effect such an article as Alsops could have on US opinion, particularly at this time when questions of further specialized aid are being considered. He was only too aware of this and deplored results that irresponsible newspaper report might have on hitherto unprecedented degree of understanding and cooperation between our two governments in this difficult and supremely important question.

On the current situation, Jacquet stated that the greatest danger at the moment comes from Paul Reynaud who is again with Edgar Faure's support (who prefer negotiation however) pushing the Cabinet to embark on the immediate adoption of a policy of withdrawal. He stated that he, Bidault, and Pleven, had had great difficulty in last Cabinet meeting of December 30 in putting down Reynaud on this proposal. Reynaud is aware of the great difficulties that any evacuation plan would entail and the length of time required to carry it out and therefore recommends that process be begun at once.

As to present military situation in Indochina, Jacquet is not too disturbed. His greatest concern is with the fact that the Viet Minh have now brought in anti-aircraft and may cause an abandonment of the field at Dien Bien Phu.

JOYCE

751G.5/1–554 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Joyce) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, January 5, 1954—8 p. m.

2503. Repeated information Saigon 256. Embtel 2478 (Saigon 250) January 4. Embassy received this afternoon note from Foreign Office dated January 4, transmitting letter dated December 30 from Laniel to Dillon (as anticipated reftel) drawing attention latter to request for delivery 18 B–26 aircraft presented MAAG Saigon by French FE air command.

Free translation Laniel letter follows:

"At occasion Bermuda Conference where military situation Indochina expatiated in name French Government by Foreign Minister Bidault, I had honor of stating personally [to] President Eisenhower that the successful development of operations would be favored to a large extent if US Government agreed to extend to French Government swift aid in the fields where our matériel resources did not permit us to meet all the needs: I evoked, in particular, the insufficiency of certain of our aerial resources.[1]

"It was particularly agreeable to me on that occasion to thank President Eisenhower for furnishing the group of C–47 transport aircraft recently loaned for Indochina by the US Government; I was appreciative on the other hand for the assurance given me that requests of this nature shown to be necessary would be examined from the point of view most favorable to the interests of which France assumes charge in Far East for defense free world.

"I would like today and in the same spirit to ask you to call attention US Government to the importance that would be assumed by the improvement of the potential of our expeditionary corps in bombardment aircraft.

"The fighters and bombers execute in Indochina the same direct and indirect missions in support ground troops; the difference of their possibilities of employment is measured solely in accordance with the radius of action of the planes and the fire power that they possess.

"In this regard, bombardment aircraft provide possibilities superior to pursuit aircraft, as much by means of fire power that they carry as by the importance of their radius of actions; they are the only kind in particular which permit accomplishing, starting from existing bases, effective missions in certain areas removed from operations.

"It is why the French air command in Far East has transmitted to MAAG Saigon, within framework of plans established by General Navarre, a request for assistance for the reinforcement of from 16 to 25 B–26 aircraft for each of the two bombardment groups in Indochina.

"I have the honor of asking you to point out especially to US Government this request of which the swift satisfaction would improve very markedly the operational potential of the troops engaged.

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[1] The statement by Premier Laniel to President Eisenhower at the Bermuda Conference has not been identified.

"I add that the necessary personnel, crews and ground mechanics, would be sent from France in sufficient time in order to assure putting in operation the supplementary aircraft requested, as soon as latter would have been delivered." [2]

JOYCE

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[2] In Note No. 216 to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jan. 6, the Embassy acknowledged receipt of the letter from Premier Laniel and indicated that it would be referred to Washington. The texts of the Laniel letter and the Embassy's reply were transmitted as enclosures to despatch 1711 from Paris, Jan. 6. (751G.00/1-654)

751.5622/1-554

Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright) to the Under Secretary of State (Smith) [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 5, 1954.

Subject: French Ambassador's call with regard to additional aircraft and other facilities for Indochina.

The French Ambassador will presumably set forth the requirements stated on page 2 of Ambassador Heath's telegram 1151 of January 3,[2] a copy of which is attached.

It is recommended that you tell the Ambassador that the Department of Defense is actively canvassing the possibility of satisfying these new French requests and that it is hoped within a very short time to have definitive answers. You might add that General Trapnell is now conferring with General Weyland of FEAF in Tokyo on this subject.

While emphasizing our earnest desire to be as helpful as possible, you may wish to suggest to Ambassador Bonnet that we are confident French air authorities will endeavor to make available additional French Air Force personnel not only for increased requirements of the current situation in Indochina but also to meet the long standing understaffing of maintenance and flight personnel which MAAG/Saigon has so frequently pointed out.[3]

For your information only: We should shortly have a report from Defense and from FEAF regarding additional planes and other equipment requested by the French. We are awaiting data regarding the possibility of making civilian flight crews available for the C–119s as was done last May. It may also be possible to secure civilian maintenance personnel.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.

[2] *Ante*, p. 937.

[3] No memorandum of the conversation between Under Secretary Smith and French Ambassador Bonnet has been found in Department of State files. However, telegram 1190 to Saigon, Jan. 6, repeated to Paris for information as telegram 2416, indicated that the meeting occurred on Jan. 5. Smith assured the Ambassador that the United States was actively engaged in determining the extent to which further French aid requests could be met. The Under Secretary expressed the hope that the French Government would do its utmost to supply additional personnel to meet the existing crisis and to meet the long-standing understaffing of maintenance and flight personnel. (751G.00/1-354)

We may be faced with a policy decision on whether to supply US Air Force maintenance personnel to maintain French Air Force combat and transport planes if these requirements cannot be met from other sources. Last spring, we sent a detachment of 25 men from Clark Field to Nha Trang primarily to maintain US owned C–47s which were on loan to the French Air Force. We have had small detachments of air force officers and men at Haiphong giving the French practical training in maintenance and in the use of heavy drop equipment. However, the use of USAF maintenance crews to perform routine maintenance functions for the French Air Force might represent a new departure and might therefore require a policy decision.

S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351, NSC 5405 Series

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 6, 1954.

Subject: Special Annex on Indochina appended to NSC 177, "US Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia" to be considered by NSC on January 8, 1954.[2]

Summary

This special annex, which is being given a very limited distribution, refers to courses of action open to the US in contingencies not covered by NSC 177, i.e., (*a*) a determination that in the absence of an offer of US military participation the French might seek to conclude the struggle in Indochina on unacceptable terms and (*b*) a French refusal to continue any participation in the war in Indochina despite offers of US participation. The alternatives open to the US are that the US should refuse to commit US forces in either of these contingencies, accepting the probable consequences, or that the US should commit US forces to supplement or replace the French.

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[1] Drafted by Assistant Secretary Robertson and Bonsal of PSA.

[2] The Special Annex, drafted by the Planning Board of the National Security Council, was recalled pursuant to decisions taken at the 179th Meeting of the NSC, Jan. 8. It was subsequently reissued on Mar. 29; for text, see p. 1183. For the pertinent portion of the memorandum of discussion at the NSC Meeting of Jan. 8, see p. 947.

NSC 177, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia," Dec. 30. 1953, was adopted as amended by the NSC on Jan. 14, 1954, and subsequently approved by the President. The amended report was issued as NSC 5405, Jan. 16, 1954. For extracts from NSC 5405, see p. 971. A copy of NSC 177 is in S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351, NSC 177 Series.

It is believed that you will wish to read this annex or at least pages 1 through 9 inclusive.

Recommendations

It is assumed the NSC will not reach a final decision at its January 8 meeting on the alternatives set forth in this special annex. In the course of any discussion, the following points might be made:

(*a*) Every effort should be made to insure the success of the Laniel-Navarre plan including emergency end-item assistance granted rapidly and generously and including if necessary additional financial assistance. All concerned must have a top level directive to give highest priorities to General Navarre's requests. We cannot afford to lose time or quibble over items which the French believe they require and which we are in a position to supply. If more funds are needed, they should be forthcoming.

(*b*) Any commitment of US forces in Indochina may lead to the eventual necessity for making progressively larger commitments.

(*c*) Such commitment would require drastic revisions upward in US budgetary, mobilization and manpower plans and appropriations, since existing plans and appropriations probably preclude the engagement of US forces in operations of the Indochina type.

(*d*) Public opinion in the US is not now ready for a decision to send US troops to Indochina and in all probability will not support such a decision unless convinced that such action is necessary to save Southeast Asia from Communist domination.

(*e*) Withdrawal of the French forces plus refusal to commit US forces would weaken the free-world position throughout Asia and probably influence the neutralist nations toward the Communist bloc.

751G.5 MSP/1-754 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Joyce) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT PARIS, January 7, 1954—8 p. m.

2535. Repeated information Saigon 264. Deptel 2391 (Saigon 1175) January 5.[1] Embassy estimates French courses of action over next three to six months:[2]

1. General. Retention Laniel government at least until after four-power conference significant in sense we may count on government's resistance any attempt modify present IC policy for immediate future when further Viet Minh military successes may possibly occur. Militarily, the government is committed to implementation of Navarre Plan which has been defined as designed improve Franco-Associated States military position IC to a point where a settlement of IC con-

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[1] Telegram 2391 to Paris, Jan. 5, requesting estimates of French courses of action under various circumstances, is not printed. (751G.5 MSP/1-554)

[2] A more detailed analysis was transmitted in despatch 1788 from Paris, Jan. 14. (751G.5 MSP/1-1454)

flict can be obtained through negotiations on best possible terms France and Associated States. Just what would represent a sufficiently strong military position from which negotiations might commence has never been defined by government and may well be assumed to be an imprecise concept that would be subject adjustment in terms future development and events. Diplomatically, the government is committed to explore in conjunction such international talks as occur the elimination Chinese Communist aid IC. Hence, if a Korean political conference or a five-power conference is held this would have bearing on future course French policy IC. The government has also indicated that it would consider in conjunction Associated States any "official" proposals emanating Viet Minh although it would not, as parliamentary minority advocated during recent parliamentary debates, take initiative to negotiate with Viet Minh. Ho could, of course, submit an "official" proposal for conversation at any time which the government could hardly ignore without in any way implying acceptance Ho's terms.

In general, Embassy is of opinion that the outcome of current military campaign will exert a determining influence on the future course of French policy IC, and that the end of the present dry-weather fighting season will involve a taking of stock and an over-all review of France's basic position at that time. Embassy concluded following recent parliamentary debates that, barring military disaster and adoption of an unreasonable attitude on part of Associated States (neither of which is presently contemplated by French officials here), the government gained time—at least until end present dry-weather fighting season—to exploit and evaluate the military and political aspects of IC policy.

2. Possible French course of action over next three to six months if:

(*a*) Military situation remains roughly as at present. If relative military balance remains unchanged by end current dry-weather fighting season, Embassy of opinion that there will be increased pressure exerted politically in France to reach a negotiated settlement IC conflict on theory Viet Minh may also be more inclined negotiate. However, we consider it better than even chance that no parliamentary majority could be mustered to face consequences of possible negotiation Viet Minh under these circumstances and that end result would be acceptance path least resistance, i.e., continuation present situation at least until some additional important development occurred to precipitate a decision. Example latter could be possible Viet Minh proposal designed give added impetus to French sentiment favoring negotiated settlement on best terms obtainable.

(*b*) Viet Minh obtain further military successes. If the Viet Minh obtain significant military successes then Embassy would consider situation critical and would anticipate that French would feel impelled seek allied troop assistance as an alternative to engaging in negotiations which might be construed as a Viet Minh victory. The nature, duration and significance of any such Viet Minh "successes", however, would have to be taken into account this regard.

(*c*) Navarre regains a real initiative. Entire situation would be altered. Pressure of French public and parliamentary opinion in favor of negotiation would be reduced in direct ratio to extent Navarre victories.

JOYCE

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 179th Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, January 8, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 179th meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General (for Item 2); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Items 1 and 2); the Deputy Secretary of Defense[2] (for Item 3); the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (for Item 3); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; Sherman Adams, the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; C. D. Jackson, Special Assistant to the President; Gen. Persons, Deputy Assistant to the President; the NSC Representative on Internal Security; the Assistant White House Staff Secretary; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

Following is a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

1. *Significant world developments affecting U.S. security*

The Director of Central Intelligence first briefed the Council on the military situation in Indochina. The French garrison at Dien Bien Phu, consisting of ten battalions, was now surrounded by approximately three Vietminh divisions. It was not yet clear whether the Vietminh would launch a frontal attack on the French position or invest it and move south toward the Thai frontier. Though in no immediate danger, the French were somewhat disturbed. While Dien

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Jan. 11.

[2] Roger M. Kyes.

Bien Phu was a strong position, the French were actually locked up in it, and fresh Vietminh battalions were en route.

In the center, where the Vietminh made their first thrust, the situation was still fluid. New French reinforcements were coming, and they should be able to clean up the Vietminh column.

Admiral Radford commented that General Navarre had told him that the Vietminh might well be able to take Dien Bien Phu if they were willing to commit the three full divisions and take the resulting heavy losses. Admiral Radford did not believe, however, that the Vietminh force was large enough both to besiege Dien Bien Phu and also move forces south into Laos. Accordingly, Admiral Radford believed that the Vietminh would probably avoid an all-out assault on Dien Bien Phu.

Mr. Allen Dulles went on to point out that the only purpose to be served by a Vietminh attack on this fortress would be the psychological damage which they could do the French will to continue the war in Indochina. This political and psychological advantage might seem to the Vietminh to be worth the military loss that they would suffer.

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4. *United States objectives and courses of action with respect to Southeast Asia* (NSC 177 and Special Annex to NSC 177)[3]

General Cutler, in introducing the report on Southeast Asia, stated that in accordance with his discussion of the paper with the President, there would be no reference to the Special Annex as such. The contingencies referred to in the Special Annex would henceforth be discussed only orally, and all copies of the Annex would be recalled for destruction. General Cutler also stated that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not yet been able to reach a final decision as to their views on NSC 177 or on the problem set forth in the Special Annex. They would therefore prefer that the Council make no decision on NSC 177 at this meeting.

General Cutler then proceeded to read to the Council many of the most important sections of the report and to summarize such portions as he did not read. He also referred to the courses of action in the two contingencies envisaged in the Special Annex: One, courses of action in the event that the French insist that they will pull out of Indochina unless we participate militarily in the war; and two, courses of action if the French state that they will pull out of Indochina in any event.

After General Cutler had finished his briefing of NSC 177, the President stated that he wanted to ask a few basic questions. First, why did the French persist in their unwillingness to allow the Associated States to put the case of Communist aggression against any of them before the UN? He had understood why the French were originally opposed to this move, but he could not understand why French objections persisted now that France had declared the Associated States to be independent.

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[3] See footnote 2, p. 944.

Secretary Dulles explained that French reluctance stemmed from French sensitivity with regard to the French position in North Africa. If the Associated States were to go to the UN, the Moroccan issue would almost certainly be raised.

The President commented that this seemed to be yet another case where the French don't know what to do—whether to go it alone or to get assistance from other nations clandestinely. They want to involve us secretly and yet are unwilling to go out openly to get allies in their struggle. For himself, said the President with great force, he simply could not imagine the United States putting ground forces anywhere in Southeast Asia, except possibly in Malaya, which we would have to defend as a bulwark to our off-shore island chain. But to do this anywhere else was simply beyond his contemplation. Indeed, the key to winning this war was to get the Vietnamese to fight. There was just no sense in even talking about United States forces replacing the French in Indochina. If we did so, the Vietnamese could be expected to transfer their hatred of the French to us. I can not tell you, said the President with vehemence, how bitterly opposed I am to such a course of action. This war in Indochina would absorb our troops by divisions!

As to the build-up of the native forces, said the Vice President, one must realize that the French talk one way but feel another. What he had seen when he was in Indochina had given rise to the gravest doubts as to the likelihood of any really strong Vietnamese national army, at least any army built up to the levels contemplated in the Navarre Plan. General de Lattre had certainly favored such a build-up, and the Vietnamese had liked him. But Generals Navarre and Cogny actually believe that the Vietnamese cannot really fight unless led by French officers. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, doubt that the French really want to train them in large numbers. Essentially, continued the Vice President, the French are fighting in the hope of keeping Vietnam in the French Union, whereas the Vietnamese really want independence outside the French Union. These objectives are incompatible, and when you pin General Navarre down he admits that the great issue as to the success of the war in Indochina is not one of matériel but, rather, of men. He does not indicate very much confidence in the training program for the native forces. This, said the Vice President, was of course a pessimistic view, but the indigenous forces are the key to success or failure. While at present plans call for the building up of the Vietnamese forces to a point where they can take over the defense of their own country, there was considerable question whether the French would really prove willing to allow us to assist them with this training program. In short, the situation was not as good as it looked on paper.

Admiral Radford said he was prepared to grant the Vice President's point, but that at least the French had agreed to receive two U.S. officers to assist with the training program.

The President then inquired whether General Navarre could be induced to agree to let us take over some considerable number of their training camps, with perhaps several hundred U.S. officers instead of two. Admiral Radford replied that in any case the French had certainly resisted such proposals in the past, as they have also been reluctant to share any of their planning for the conduct of the war with U.S. officers.

The essence of the problem, said the Vice President, was political. The French certainly want to win the war in Indochina, but they want to win it without building up the Vietnamese to the point where they could win it alone.

The President commented that in view of the fact that Frenchmen back at home were so thoroughly sick of the war in Indochina, one would imagine that the French would be glad to have the Vietnamese bear the brunt.

The trouble was, answered the Vice President, that French are aware that if the Vietnamese become strong enough to hold their country alone, they would proceed to remove themselves from the French Union. To this the President commented that if the French had been smart they would long since have offered the Associated States independence on the latters' own terms. We had made such an offer to the Puerto Ricans recently, and they had all run to cover. In any event, said the President, if the United States could take over a good part of the training of the native forces in Indochina, it would relieve the French non-coms for combat.

Admiral Radford agreed with this judgment on the need for additional French non-coms, but pointed out that the real reasons why the French were still fighting this war after seven years was their earlier reluctance to train any of the Vietnamese.

The President said that one of the outstanding failures of the Western world in Asia was its inability to produce good fighting material in the Asian countries for which Western powers were responsible. The Communists were more effective. They got hold of the most unlikely people and turned them into great fighters.

The Vice President said that in the course of a discussion he had had with General Trapnell, the point had been made that what was lacking to induce the Vietnamese to fight was a "cause". General Trapnell had argued against this view, and insisted that if the native soldiers were well led, well equipped and well trained, they would fight. No "cause" was so important as these considerations. This, said the Vice President, was of course a controversial view, but it was an interesting observation, which made the Vice President feel that the President's idea of assisting the Associated States with a large training mission might be a very effective measure.

At this point General Cutler stated that NSC 177 had reached the conclusion that there was no danger of a French military defeat in Indochina except in the event of overt Chinese aggression. Moreover, Admiral Radford, in a conversation with him, had expressed the opinion that the French could not possibly get out of Indochina, since most of them would be murdered in the process of trying to get out. Accordingly, said General Cutler, wasn't the real question before the Council whether we propose to give in if the French turn to us and request the participation of U.S. forces in the war in Indochina?

Secretary Dulles pointed out that the French had not asked us for any combat forces, but General Cutler said that he understood that they had asked for additional U.S. aircraft together with pilots to fly them, and was not this the camel getting his head through the door?

Admiral Radford broke in to say that there was a certain amount of history in this issue. He pointed out that when he was Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific he had been given orders to draw up plans to assist the French in the air. He had done just this,[4] and he now felt that the United States should do everything possible to forestall a French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Indeed, if necessary we should send an aircraft carrier to assist the French if they appear to be in danger of losing this strong point. The French Air Force had fought well, but its upkeep and maintenance was poor.

Secretary Humphrey said he simply did not see how we could talk of sending people, as opposed to money, to bail the French out. When we start putting our men into Indochina, how long will it be before we get into the war? And can we afford to get into such a war?

Admiral Radford said that of course we already had a lot of men in Indochina now, though none of them in combat operations. Nevertheless, he insisted, we are really in this war today in a big way.

Secretary Humphrey repeated his arguments against sending American troops to Indochina, and said that although he appreciated how serious the loss of Dien Bien Phu could be, it could not be, he thought, bad enough to involve the United States in combat in Indochina.

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[4] At Admiral Radford's direction, a planning team from CINCPAC headquarters had visited Indochina from Nov. 10 to 18, 1952. See Edwin Bickford Hooper, Dean C. Allard, and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict*, vol. I, *The Setting of the Stage to 1959*, Navy Historical Division, Department of the Navy (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 190.

The President commented that even if we did not send pilots we could certainly send planes and men to take over the maintenance of the planes.

Governor Stassen queried whether this would be enough to stave off the loss of the Dien Bien Phu base. Admiral Radford explained that the French situation at the base was serious because the Vietminh had succeeded in moving up heavy anti-aircraft support. The French feel that they are not capable of destroying these antiaircraft guns, whereas Admiral Radford was convinced that our pilots could destroy them.

The President commented that if any of our people were to get into this jungle fighting, they should certainly be given the proximity fuse or VT fuse bombs, not just ordinary bombs. Let's hurry up and give them some.

General Cutler again pointed out to the members of the Council that there was nothing whatever in NSC 177 which authorized the introduction of U.S. combat forces into Indochina at this time.

The President replied that Admiral Radford was, of course, not referring to general policy but to a specific action with reference to the Indochina war. It was certainly going to be necessary to work out some way by which our planes could be used. Obviously we couldn't just fly them into combat off the carrier.

Secretary Humphrey again expressed his great concern lest this move involve the United States in the war, and General Cutler asked the Secretary of State if this might not well be the first step by which the French would proceed to unload their military responsibility on the United States. Did not the Secretary of State fear this consequence?

Secretary Dulles said that he did not believe that Admiral Radford's proposal would have this consequence, and the President added that while no one was more anxious than himself to keep our men out of these jungles, we could nevertheless not forget our vital interests in Indochina.

General Cutler expressed his strong opposition to this course of action, and Secretary Humphrey asked the question, "Suppose the French were to give up and turn the whole country over to the Communists. Would the United States then interfere?" The President replied no, we would not intervene, but that we had better go to full mobilization. Speaking to the Secretary of the Treasury, the President said what you've got here is a leaky dike, and with leaky dikes it's sometimes better to put a finger in than to let the whole structure be washed away.

But, said General Cutler, how about the alternative of making the French do it? To this both the President and Admiral Radford replied, in effect, what else have we been doing all these years?

Admiral Radford went on to speculate that if we could put one squadron of U.S. planes over Dien Bien Phu for as little as one afternoon, it might save the situation. Weren't the stakes worth it? We were already in this thing in such a big way that it seemed foolish not to make the one small extra move which might be essential to success.

The President thought . . . [of] a little group of fine and adventurous pilots. . . . Then, continued the President, we should give these pilots U.S. planes without insignia and let them go. That, said the President, was the right way to use the planes from the aircraft carrier, and this all could be done without involving us directly in the war, which he admitted would be a very dangerous thing. Admiral Radford also believed that some such arrangement as this could be worked out.

Secretary Wilson then inquired whether we proposed to give the French the extra planes for which they had asked as an emergency measure. He thought we could do at least this much for them.

Admiral Radford replied to Secretary Wilson by pointing out that the obstacle in this situation was financial. To provide the French with these additional planes would cost more than the allocated funds.

The President turned to the Secretary of the Air Force, who sat behind him, and asked whether we would not be glad to get rid of some of these B–26's. When Secretary Talbott replied in the affirmative, the President inquired whether we could not write down the cost of the B–26.

Admiral Radford added that if we did provide the French with this additional emergency aid, we might use it as a lever to secure a more active part in the plan of campaign with General Navarre.

General Cutler then asked the President what form the Council action on this item should take. The President summed it up by stating that in point of fact the French were at present unable to get out of Indochina, so the problem was to see what additional measures the United States might take to assist them.

Admiral Radford responded to the President's point by suggesting that one of the things that could be done would be to keep General O'Daniel continuously in Indochina, and if necessary give him another star.

The President said that he felt this would be a fine move, and Secretary Wilson thought that General O'Daniel should also be provided with greater flexibility in the delivery of matériel to the French, a point which the Vice President also thought of great importance. The

President and Admiral Radford also agreed that while we have provided military assistance in large amounts to the French in Indochina, we had been rather inflexible about certain specific items.

The President then suggested that after the responsible Council members had studied what additional measures could be undertaken to assist the French, there be a presentation before the National Security Council. The object was to get down to concrete proposals and measures.

The Vice President commented that one of the most disappointing features in Indochina was the failure of French propaganda to convince the people of Vietnam that they were on the road to independence. Our own USIS program in this area was also very weak. The Vice President wondered if it would not be worth while if Mr. C. D. Jackson were to look into the situation and see what could be done.

The National Security Council: [5]

a. Discussed the reference report on the subject (NSC 177) and deferred action until the next Council meeting, pending the receipt of the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff thereon.

b. Noted the President's directive that all copies of the Special Annex to NSC 177 should be recalled for destruction.

c. Agreed that Lieutenant General John Wilson O'Daniel should be stationed continuously in Indochina, under appropriate liaison arrangements and with sufficient authority to expedite the flexible provision of U.S. assistance to the French Union forces.

d. Requested the Department of Defense, in collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency, urgently to study and report to the Council all feasible further steps, short of the overt use of U.S. forces in combat, which the United States might take to assist in achieving the success of the "Laniel–Navarre" Plan.

Note: The action in *c* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense for appropriate implementation. The action in *d* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence for appropriate implementation.

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[5] Points *a–d* below constituted NSC Action No. 1005. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

751G.00/1–1254 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, January 12, 1954—7 p. m.

2597. Limit distribution. Repeated information Saigon 272. Embassy has had three significant conversations on Indochina with members cabinet in last few days. First with Barrachin[1] was in connection with internal politics (Embtel 2571)[2] but was extended to Indochina at his instigation.

He stated that unfavorable reports had been received recently from Navarre, that his requests for non-com and officer reinforcements had been turned down, prospect of improving military situation to extent that negotiations could be undertaken two years from now was poor and that altogether France's position in AS was hopeless and that she would have to give up struggle somehow. He blamed government (of which he is member) for concealing nature of France's plight from US for reasons which were presumably concerned with fear we would reduce our aid. We informed Barrachin that as far as we knew, full facts of Indochinese military situation were known to us, but if we were mistaken, prompt steps should be taken to inform us for if Franco–US cooperation in Indochina were not based on mutual confidence, trust and understanding, the hopelessness he spoke of would be indisputable. Barrachin stated he would so inform his colleagues. It is to be remembered in considering Barrachin's remarks that he is Gaullist (ARS) and has no direct responsibility for Indochinese affairs. For these reasons his views on Indochina are colored and he is generally less well informed on the subject than others of his cabinet colleagues.

We then called on Jacquet to check Barrachin's statements. He stated that letter in question was one from Navarre to General Ely, written in mid-November. About 100 additional officers and non-coms had been requested and turned down because they would have had to come from NATO units, which was not considered feasible. Estimate of two-year period before negotiations could be undertaken was accurate, made by Navarre last July and dates from that time. It was qualified, however, by conditions that (*a*) Chinese aid to Viet Minh remains at level it was at time and (*b*) Navarre receive certain men and equipment (which he did as part of conditions for US 385 million aid).

He now wished to give most up-to-date report from best source. He then read military portions Navarre's last top secret report to government of late December 1953, main features of which are (together with Jacquet's added comment on subsequent events):

1. Chinese aid to enemy has now increased considerably, particularly in (*a*) logistics equipment (trucks, etc.,) (*b*) heavy artillery, and (*c*) anti-aircraft, including 37 mm.

(2) Laos campaign will be important one. Jacquet added that situation now relatively secure with French enjoying numerical and strategical superiority and enemy having suffered heavy losses.

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[1] Edmond Barrachin, French Minister for Constitutional Reform.

[2] Telegram 2571 from Paris, Jan. 11, is not printed. (751.00/1–1153)

3. Dien Bien Phu is, however, crucial area. Major if not decisive battle will be fought there. Victory or defeat will radically affect course of entire war.

4. Key to Dien Bien Phu is ability of French use their air force. Threat to it represented by Viet heavy artillery and anti-aircraft is of vital importance and might be decisive factor in campaign.

5. Navarre must have additional men, equipment and services.

To specify nature equipment and services being requested from US (in addition to reinforcements being requested from France) Jacquet, at Prime Minister's instruction, has asked Achilles to call tomorrow. Bonnet being instructed carry out similar *démarche* with Department at same time. Request will be for additional B–26 aircraft and US Air Force mechanics (in civilian clothes) to service them and possibly other planes.

Jacquet added that present rate of French losses is heavy but not when considered in light size operations. Between 50–70 officers had been lost since opening of active operations. Success of Dien Bien Phu battle vital not only for reasons stated in relation to other French Union offensive plans. Jacquet leaving for Saigon January 17.

Third official seen on Indochina was Pleven whose talk with Achilles subject immediate following telegram.[3] Detailed memos conversation Barrachin–Jacquet talks being forwarded by pouch.

ACHILLES

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[3] *Infra.*

751G.00/1–1254 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, January 12, 1954—7 p. m.

2598. Repeated information Saigon 273. Pleven this morning reviewed Indochina situation along following lines:

He was less preoccupied with military situation there than with political situation here. Nevertheless, he was not pessimistic about either. Pressure within government for steps towards negotiations continued but Laniel remained adamant against any negotiations unless and until France could enter them from position of strength. As long as Laniel remained firm and Prime Minister his will would prevail, although much would depend on military situation at end of present fighting season.

There would be heavy fighting in next two months. Development of Vietnamese army was proceeding but not quickly enough and replacement of Tam, man of action who had always been on the spot, by Buu Loc, who had spent last three years as diplomat in Paris, was not conducive either to expediting development of Vietnamese army or giving it fighting spirit. Situation in Laos was under control but major action of strategic significance might begin at any time near Dien-Bien-Phu, where Viet Minh had at least two divisions and French only one.

Navarre needed additional planes, particularly bombers, and mechanics (Jacquet has asked me to call tomorrow to discuss this). Navarre had also requested additional assignment of 300 officers and 1800 non-coms. This will be hard to meet but Pleven was determined to do what he could. He hoped to visit Indochina himself about end of month to form his own impression on spot.

ACHILLES

751H.5/1–1254 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, January 12, 1954—9 p. m.

1234. Repeated information Paris 377, Hanoi, Phnom Penh unnumbered. Over weekend, I had long talks with King Sihanouk and Chan Nak, Cambodian Prime Minister. I found the King full of confidence, moderate and satisfied that his personally-led operation against Viet Minh in Battambang had been both a military and political success. He said he realized that his military problem was much less important and serious than that of Vietnam, but he argued that Cambodian situation nevertheless merited slightly more military assistance from the United States and France than had so far been contemplated. He needed several thousand more men and provision should be made for giving Cambodia a few planes for strafing and light bombing and to build up a Cambodian air force. The French had loaned him planes for his recent operation, but he could never be sure that he could have them precisely when he needed them. Furthermore, bombing by French planes with French markings were used by the political opposition to allege that the King was calling in the French to kill Cambodians. I asked the King whether he had made a definite request to the French High Command for additional assistance and he answered "not yet".

I reminded him that under our present pentapartite accord, it was necessary first to present requests for military assistance to the High Command. We, of course, would be consulted by the French and I felt that any reasonable request would receive sympathetic treatment within the limits of our appropriations. I remarked, however, that while the United States had increased its financial support of the war effort in Indochina, that the $385 million additional we had promised had already been budgeted almost in its entirety. I said that at some future date we might deal separately with the three states or the

French Union Forces but for the present we were bound by the terms of the five-part agreement and that it would not be practical even if determined that it was the best thing to do to deal separately with the Associated States. Under the existing system I thought their justified requirements could be met.

As regards setting up a separate air force, this was a difficult, lengthy and expensive business. I suggested as a possible solution that when they borrowed planes from the French the planes, during the operation, might be marked with the Cambodian colors. I told him that we had occasionally loaned planes to the French Union Air Force and during the period of the loan allowed them to be painted with French markings.

To my inquiry as to the progress of his negotiations with the French, the King stated he would send a delegation to Paris the end of January for final negotiations. He said he would have negotiated earlier but that, frankly, he and his negotiators were having to reconsider their previous stand that Cambodia would secede from the Quadripartite Customs and Currency Union. They had discovered it would be very difficult and costly to set up a separate Cambodian customs organization. He indicated he would like to remain in the present quadripartite system but that Cambodian public opinion was dead set against it. I observed that Cambodian public opinion could hardly be so unintelligent as not to understand one could not inaugurate a separate customs and currency system overnight. I suggested for the good of Cambodia that as a practical matter they remain on in the present system for some time. I also observed that the US generally regarded customs unions with approval and pointed out that the Benelux arrangement was meeting with success.

The King said he was quite prepared to conclude some form of future association with France, but both he and the Prime Minister evaded indicating whether Cambodia would remain in the French Union or seek a purely bilateral arrangement.

During our conversations, there was no word of criticism of the French, but both the King and the Prime Minister complained with some bitterness over President Tam's action in withholding Cambodia's share of customs collections in Vietnamese ports. The arrears due Cambodia now amounted, they claimed, to 800 million piastres. I agreed warmly that Vietnamese action was unjustified but reminded them that a pretext for Tam's action had been given when the Cambodian Government stated last summer that they intended to drop out of the Customs Union. The King rather ruefully agreed and told me that DeJean made a suggestion that Vietnam might pay its arrears over a period of two years. The Prime Minister argued that in such an arrangement Vietnam should pay interest. I remarked that recovering the principal was more important than the interest.

The King made no reference to the fact that STEM has not approved its final program for Cambodia for fiscal year 1954, but the Prime Minister rather wistfully asked me whether this approval could not be rendered without further delay. I replied that I hoped STEM would be able to make final arrangements in a short time. I took General McReynolds, STEM Director, with me on my calls to both the King and the Prime Minister. On my return, I authorized STEM to grant certain funds for war refugee relief in Cambodia but am still requesting STEM to hold off final approval of the Cambodian program until a little clearer whether Cambodia will cooperate with the other states and the French Union Forces in this military emergency.

DeJean, French Commissioner General, today went to Cambodia to consult with the King. DeJean tells me he thinks it will be possible to increase the French military subsidies to the Cambodian Government and also make some initial arrangements toward setting up a Cambodian air force.

HEATH

751G.5622/1-1354 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET

PARIS, January 13, 1954—7 p. m.
[Received 4:38 p. m.]

2604. Repeated information Saigon priority 274. Eyes only Secretary and Chief of Mission. Reference: Embtels 2597 [1] and 2598.[2]

I saw Jacquet this morning at his request. The government emergency request for Indochina which we had been told would be presented to us today was not because it is still clearing Pleven's and Laniel's offices. It should be delivered to us tomorrow. It will ask for an additional squadron of 25 B-26s with complete operational and maintenance crews plus an unspecified number of mechanics to service other B-26s which have been requested separately.

New request is entirely apart from 10 B-26s referred to by Bodet and reported in Saigon's 1151 to Department repeated Paris 351 [3] and 18 B-26s referred to in Laniel's letter of December 30 to Dillon transmitted to Department in Embtel 2478 repeated Saigon 250.[4] Bodet and Laniel requests overlap and refer to same planes except that quantity increased from 10 to 18.

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[1] Dated Jan. 12, p. 954.
[2] Dated Jan. 12, p. 956.
[3] Dated Jan. 3, p. 937.
[4] Dated Jan. 4, p. 938.

Jacquet reiterated expected battle in Dien Bien Phu might be decisive one. He stressed urgency of obtaining operational squadron and in response to my query as to exact degree of urgency, he mentioned 10 or 12 days.

I told him that request for planes and mechanics would certainly be considered urgently and sympathetically but that request for pilots and flight crews for combat operation obviously raised most serious questions.[5]

ACHILLES

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[5] In telegram 2605 from Paris, Jan. 13, Achilles transmitted the following additional information: "After talking with Norstad I sent word to Jacquet that in former's opinion experienced French pilots and air crews could be trained to operational readiness in B–26s in ten days, and that facilities to do so were available in France and presumably also in Japan should Washington order it done.

"Jacquet's response was definitely favorable. Accordingly believe request for crews was based on genuine operational rather than political factors." (751G.5622/1–1354)

Gen. Lauris Norstad, USAF, was Air Deputy, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe.

751G.13/1–1354: Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, January 13, 1954—6 p. m.
[Received 10:57 p. m.]

1240. Repeated information Paris 378, Hanoi 175. Re Embtel 1227 to Department, repeated information Paris 373.[1] Transfer of powers from Tam Government to Buu Loc Government took place afternoon January 12. Ceremony bringing together incoming and outgoing ministers attended by press and limited group Vietnamese. Tam in friendly session spoke first outlining progress his government toward objective of establishment democratic electoral system and making friendly references to job of incoming government. Buu Loc replied with praise for Tam achievements and generalities with regard new government's program. Turnover government contrasts strongly with brusque treatment given Huu Government when replaced by Tam.

According Buu Loc press statement his government will be inaugurated January 16 when his program will be made public. Commissioner General De Jean informs me program envisages rapid completion negotiations with France, clean up and establishment honesty in government and revision agrarian reform law establishing unrealistic agricultural land rental ceiling at 15 percent and that Buu Loc has been choosing his ministers with view to dignity, reputation and honesty.

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[1] Telegram 1227 from Saigon, Jan. 13, not printed, reported on the announcement that day of the membership of the new government of Buu Loc. Appointments included Nguyen Quoc Dinh as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Phan Huy Quat as Minister of Defense. (751G.13/1–1254)

New Council Ministers, on which biographic data being prepared has nice geographic balance with six each from north and south and three from center. Technicians and political figures also balanced. Six ministers have never before served in any government, several have lived considerable periods in France and one, Huyen, has long residence in Viet Minh zone.

Embassy impressed by lack "professional nationalists" and by predominance strong personal supporters of Bao Dai who may be expected faithfully reflect his views. Confessional groups in south had previously announced intention support Bao Dai but remain out of government.

HEATH

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 180th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, January 14, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 180th meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Acting Secretary of Defense; the Acting Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Acting Secretary of the Interior (for Item 1); the Secretary of Commerce (for Item 1); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Item 3); the Federal Civil Defense Administrator (for Item 3); the Under Secretary of State; the Service Secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (for Item 3); Col. Bonesteel, Mr. Lehrer and Col. Powell, Department of Defense (for Item 3); the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler and C. D. Jackson, Special Assistants to the President; Richard L. Hall, NSC Special Staff; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

Following is a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

1. *Significant world developments affecting U.S. security*

. . . .

Mr. [Allen] Dulles then briefed the Council on the latest intelligence regarding the situation at Dien Bien Phu. There were now 11,000 French Union troops in 15 battalions at the base. They had only six days' supplies of rations. Nevertheless, unless the Vietminh were able to stop the airlift, no difficulties in supply were to be anticipated, and it was thought unlikely that the Vietminh anti-aircraft guns could stop this airlift. The number of Vietminh troops, said Mr. Dulles, would amount by January 15 to some 24,000 in 19 battalions. It was thought doubtful that this was a sufficient number to take Dien Phu by frontal attack.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Jan. 15.

. . . .

4. *United States objectives and courses of action with respect to Southeast Asia* (NSC 177; NSC Action No. 1005; Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated January 12, 1954)[2]

Mr. Cutler referred to the action of the Council at last week's meeting on NSC 177, called attention to the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which had been received since the last meeting, and pointed out that the Joint Chiefs had suggested language to cover the two splits which occurred in NSC 177.

With respect to the split on page 1 of NSC 177, which read "a defeat or an abandonment of the struggle by France would diminish France's value as a factor in free world defense [in Europe and in North Africa]",[3] Secretary Dulles said that he had a more drastic solution for the disagreements, namely, that the entire sentence, and not merely the bracketed phrase, should be deleted. There were some people who argued that France might be much stronger at home or in North Africa if it got out of French Indochina. The President indicated that the preceding sentence sufficed to cover the problem.

Secretary Dulles went on to argue that the proper focus of interest of the NSC was the effect of a French abandonment of the struggle in Indochina on U.S. security interests, and it was accordingly academic to get into an argument as to the effect of such abandonment on French security interests. After all, continued Secretary Dulles, the United States is not engaged in defending France's vital interests; and the vital interests of the United States, as the President had pointed out, were adequately covered by the previous sentence.

Mr. Cutler explained and defended the Planning Board's inclusion of this sentence, but the Secretary of State repeated his contention that it was beside the point to become involved in arguments as to the effect on France of a withdrawal from the struggle in Indochina.

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[2] For text of an additional portion of the record of the discussion of this item, see volume XII. NSC 177, as slightly amended, was approved as NSC 5405 of Jan. 16; for extracts from NSC 5405, see p. 971. The text of NSC Action No. 1005 is included in the extracts of the memorandum of discussion at the 179th Meeting of the Council, Jan. 8, printed on p. 947. For the Jan. 12 memorandum by Executive Secretary Lay to the NSC, transmitting a memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, see volume XII.

[3] Brackets in the source text.

Mr. Cutler observed that the Planning Board had gone down to defeat at the hands of the Council. He would accept the defeat, . . .

. . . .

After some further discussion on this matter, the Secretary of State requested the Council's permission to make some observations. He then said that despite everything that we do there remained a possibility that the French position in Indochina would collapse. If this happened and the French were thrown out, it would, of course, become the responsibility of the victorious Vietminh to set up a government and maintain order in Indochina. In his opinion, said Secretary Dulles, he did not believe that in this contingency this country would simply say "Too bad; we're licked and that's the end of it." If we could carry on effective guerrilla operations against this new Vietminh government we should be able to make as much trouble for this government as they had made for our side and against the legitimate governments of the Associated States in recent years. Moreover, the costs would be relatively low. Accordingly, an opportunity will be open to us in Southeast Asia even if the French are finally defeated by the Communists. We can raise hell and the Communists will find it just as expensive to resist as we are now finding it. Secretary Dulles recommended that a lot more thought be given to this opportunity instead of wasting time in worrying too much about what we should do if the French were defeated in Indochina or abandoned it.

. . . .

The President observed that he wished we could have done something like this after the victory of the Communists in China. Secretary Dulles answered that of course it was a grave mistake to have allowed the Communists the opportunity to consolidate their position in China. If we had made our plans in advance we might well have succeeded in keeping Communist China in a turmoil. In any event, the possibilities should be kept in mind for Indochina.

Mr. Cutler reminded the Council that the reason that no such suggestions had been made in this paper was the feeling of the Council and the Planning Board that NSC 177 should not even mention the possibility of a French abandonment of their responsibilities in Indochina.

The Vice President commented that while Secretary Dulles' idea had merit, he was not clear as to where we would find the guerrillas. He predicted that the Vietnamese would not like this role. He also added the thought that the departure of the French from Indochina might provide just what was lacking to the Vietnamese by way of the will to fight. They might therefore allow us to come in and build up their native forces and in general do for them what the French had thus far failed to do. The Vice President cautioned that this did not mean the introduction of U.S. combat forces.

The President also expressed approval of Secretary Dulles' idea, and pointed out, apropos of it, the very great role which the Russians had informed him was played by their own guerrillas in defeating the Germans in World War II.

The National Security Council:[4]

a. Adopted the statement of policy contained in NSC 177, subject to the following changes:

(1) Delete the last sentence of paragraph 1–*a.*[5]
(2) Delete paragraph 46, and renumber succeeding paragraphs.[6]

b. Agreed that the Director of Central Intelligence, in collaboration with other appropriate departments and agencies, should develop plans, as suggested by the Secretary of State, for certain contingencies in Indochina.

Note: NSC 177, as amended, subsequently approved by the President, circulated as NSC 5405, and referred to the Operations Coordinating Board as the coordinating agency designated by the President. The action in *b* above subsequently transmitted to the Director of Central Intelligence for implementation.

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[4] Points *a* and *b* below constituted NSC Action No. 1011. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

[5] For information on this deletion, see the second paragraph of discussion under item 4, above.

[6] For paragraph 46 of NSC 177, which concerned action to be taken in the event of major Communist aggression against Thailand, see footnote 5 to Robertson's memorandum to Secretary Dulles, Jan. 6, 1954, printed in volume XII.

751G.00/1–1554 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, January 15, 1954—4 p. m.
[Received 8:49 a. m.]

389. Repeated information Saigon 279, Paris 166 (Paris limit distribution).

General Cogny said yesterday that anticipated Viet Minh attack on Dien-Bien-Phu, which he had said earlier should not be expected before January 15 (Contel 363)[1] appears now to have been delayed further as result intensive French air attacks on Viet Minh communications lines. Asked how long delay might be, Cogny replied, "Several days at the least".

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[1] Telegram 363 from Hanoi, Dec. 3, 1953, which reported observations by General Cogny on the military situation, is not printed. (751J.00/12–3153)

Patrols have proved Dien-Bien-Phu to be surrounded on all sides by enemy forces lying just outside artillery range. Reconnaissance in any direction now provokes strong Viet Minh reaction. Cogny said it is certain that divisions 308 and 316 are in vicinity of strong point; there are strong indications, but not proof, that division 312 is likewise in area. Viet Minh appear be making maximum logistic effort in that country, operating on scale hitherto unknown during seven years of war, using tens of thousands of coolies for transport as well as trucks which have been sighted in convoys numbering as many as 40. Regarding Viet Minh anti-aircraft guns, Cogny said pilots have reported bursts of shells fired at them indicated weapons to be of 37 or possibly 40 millimeters. General said Viet Minh might attempt ring Dien-Bien-Phu with anti-aircraft, but terrain is such that if guns were most favorably placed they would offer good target for French artillery.

Meanwhile, Dien-Bien-Phu continues to be sustained and strengthened by average of 60 DC–3 and 20 flying boxcar flights daily. Airfield has been covered with 800 meters of pierced steel planking and made solid enough to take emergency landings of flying boxcars (of which there have been two this week). M–24 (Chaffee) light tanks have been flown in, dismounted in Bristol aircraft and re-assembled in few days. 155-millimeter Howitzers have been flown into strong point, first such air movement made here, to offset 105-millimeter guns Viet Minh are believed to be bringing up. Thus far, Dien-Bien-Phu outposts have been brought under only light mortar fire by enemy.

Cogny says there is still no indication Viet Minh will by-pass Dien-Bien-Phu and advance on Luang Prabang. He thinks Viet Minh attack on middle Mekong has been heavily overplayed and does not regard it as having more than political significance. He said information he has received indicates French could retake Thakhek at will, but he added he does not know what Navarre's plans for the area may be.

Within Tonkin delta, Cogny is still hampered by absence of his parachute battalions (Contel 363). If they were available, he said, he could not only take advantage of lessened enemy pressure on delta perimeter to clean out zones which remain heavily infested with Viet Minh regular and regional troops, but could also make raids on large enemy rear bases, going as far afield perhaps as Yen-bay and Thai-nguyen. Meanwhile, a somewhat new tactic imposed by his relative poverty in reserves has been yielding acceptable results in delta; this tactic consists of establishing groupes mobiles for considerable periods in positions near known enemy bases and ultimately provoking attack. Operation "Gerfaut" against Viet Minh regiment 50 in Thai-Binh is an example of this procedure, and Cogny commented that he is now beginning to see his way to the end of it. A similar operation is underway in Hung-yen against regiment 42, already badly battered as result of its attacks on strongly resisting posts in recent weeks. Viet Minh regiment 46 remains on right bank of Red River in south delta but at present is not very threatening.

Comment: Cogny appeared less confident during interview with regard to outcome of an eventual attack on Dien-Bien-Phu than he has been hitherto, tending to qualify his statements with such remarks as "at least I think so." There is no doubt that if three enemy divisions, supported by artillery and anti-aircraft, are thrown against Dien-Bien-Phu, strong point's position will be critical.

STURM

751G.00/1–1554 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, January 15, 1954—2 p. m.

[Received 10:01 a.m.]

2629. Repeated information niact Saigon 277. Reference: Embtels 2605,[1] 2604,[2] 2597,[3] 2598.[4] Embassy has now received from Jacquet copy of memorandum which will be attached to letter which we are told to expect from Prime Minister's office. Letter will be one of simple transmission, memorandum contains specific details requests, résumé of which follows:

In order to counter considerably increased Viet-Minh military potential, carry out successful defense Dien Bien Phu and planned offensive operations, French Union Army will need additional transport and bomber aircraft. Needs include both personnel and matériel for existing units and creation of new group of B–26s. Specific needs:

(*a*) *Reinforcement in personnel for existing units.*

1. The reinforcement of specialized mechanics for C–47s and B–26s needed in order to raise the operational possibilities of existing groups (four groups of C–47s and two groups of B–26s).

2. The number of these specialists needed is about 400 according to specifications which will be furnished by the Commander-in-Chief to MAAG at Saigon.

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[1] See footnote 5, p. 960.
[2] Dated Jan. 13, p. 959.
[3] Dated Jan. 12, p. 954.
[4] Dated Jan. 12, p. 956.

(*b*) *Reinforcement in matériel of existing units.*

A number of B–26 aircraft necessary to raise the number of two groups of existing bomber aircraft to 25 (confirmation of request already made).

The urgent satisfaction of the demands for technical matériel and ammunition already expressed to MAAG Saigon.

(*c*) *Creation of a new bombing unit.*

A new group of B–26 bombers.

Department will note that request represents major change from that which Jacquet informed us we might expect (Embtel 2604 repeated to Saigon as 274) in that it does not include operational and maintenance crews for new B–26 groups. Explanation of change that Bidault and Pleven objected strenuously to alteration from basic existing policy (to seek and accept any US aid short of actual troop participation) which proposed request for US pilots flight crews would have represented. Argument within Cabinet over this subject and proposal that suggestion be made to us that recruitment in Foreign Legion be used as cover for US volunteer combatants in Indochina is reason why delivery of letter and attachments over Prime Minister's signature has been delayed three days.[5]

Regarding Saigon's 1246 repeated Paris as 381.[6] Decision of such gravity as request for US personnel to perform combat functions obviously one for government rather than Navarre as course of events here has shown.

General Bodet today conferred with Norstad and Gruenther and was told that we were anxious do everything possible supply machines but that French had to make similar effort supply flight and ground crews necessary assure full use existing and newly requested aircraft. Bodet stated he now fighting out that battle with Pleven.

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[5] In telegram 2642 from Paris, Jan. 16, Achilles stated the following:

"Re Embtel 2629. Embassy has still not received official letter confirming memorandum outlined in reference telegram. Latest delay is said to be caused by Bidault's continued questioning of suggestion for US volunteer recruitment in Foreign Legion (Embtel 2629) and a request for American crews for the operation of 12 C–119's at present in Indochina on loan (this request in addition to those enumerated in résumé of memorandum contained reference telegram but crews in question would be included in 400 US technicians requested in *a*(2).

"In any case interministerial meeting, including Laniel, Bidault, Pleven and Jacquet, has been called for late today to settle matter prior Jacquet's departure for Saigon tomorrow. Meanwhile, Secretariat Associated States asks us consider memorandum as working document." (751G.00/1–1654)

[6] Telegram 1246 from Saigon, Jan. 14, read as follows: "We were astonished to read Jacquet's request for additional squadron of 25 B–26's with complete operational and maintenance crews reported in Paris' 2604, January 13, to Department, acceptance of which would mean our becoming a belligerent in this war through the employment of American military combat pilots. No request for military combat pilots was made by Navarre although at first he thought of asking temporary loan of military pilots for transport planes on non-combat missions but withdrew that request when we reminded him that we might be able to furnish civilian pilots for purely transport missions on the C–119's now on loan to the French Union forces, as we did last spring. I assume that Jacquet made a mistake in saying that French Government had asked for military pilots." (751G.00/1–1454)

ACHILLES

PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 15 January 1954.

Subject: Steps Which the United States Might Take to Assist in Achieving Success of the Navarre Plan.

1. In response to the action taken by the National Security Council (NSC) on 8 January 1954 on NSC 177,[1] the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend for your consideration the actions shown hereafter, Appendix "B" of which was prepared in consultation with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), to assist in achieving the success of the Navarre Plan.[2]

2. The actions are considered to be feasible within the framework of existing national policies and will not involve the overt use of U.S. forces in combat. However, in view of the continuing changes in the military situation in Indochina, together with their influence on existing national politico-military policies and commitments in other areas, the actions should be reviewed and re-evaluated on a continuing basis.

3. Appropriate agencies of the government should undertake the following actions:

a. Place renewed emphasis upon the attainment and maintenance of the full support by the government of France of the Navarre Plan and United States measures in support of it. This full support by France of the Navarre Plan should include the augmentation of the French Air Force, Indochina, with maintenance and air crew personnel from military and/or civilian resources available in metropolitan France or elsewhere. The U.S. supporting measures should include necessary matériel and financial support but should not include military and/or civilian personnel except in certain highly specialized categories.

Discussion: The French government is under strong and increasing domestic pressure to reduce the French military commitment in Indochina. French national sensitivity continues—particularly upon points of prestige. Although General Navarre has adopted many of the recommendations of Lieutenant General John D. [*W.*] O'Daniel, USA, other recommendations pertaining to training, tactics, strategy, and logistics have not yet been fully implemented. In some cases the reasons for this lack of cooperation may be political in nature, and therefore beyond General Navarre's control. In summary, a renewed effort to obtain full support of the Navarre Plan and U.S. measures to support it, including those hereafter recommended, is essential.

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[1] For the pertinent extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 179th Meeting of the National Security Council, Jan. 8, see p. 947.

[2] The appendices do not accompany the source text.

b. Approach the French with a proposal to organize a volunteer air group composed of personnel from various anti-communist nations or groups to serve with the French Union forces in Indochina as outlined in Appendix "A".

Discussion: This examination was directed by the President at the NSC meeting of 8 January 1954. While the President emphasized participation by U.S. volunteer personnel he also mentioned the inclusion of other nationals. Since this is a definitive means by which the French can increase the Indochinese air effort as desired by them and thereby increase their over-all air capability this step is militarily desirable. Its feasibility is limited only by the provision of sufficient U.S. funds.

c. Assign additional technical specialists to MAAG, Indochina, in accordance with the recommendations of the November O'Daniel report, so as to maximize technical assistance to the French Union forces.

Discussion: Additional technical advisory personnel are needed for MAAG, Indochina, to provide guidance and training to the French.

d. Convince the French military authorities that it is imperative to increase unconventional warfare activities as suggested in Appendix "B", the substance of which is a broad general concept, for the use of guerrillas and can be used as the basis for discussions between General O'Daniel and authorities in Indochina in order to appropriately influence the French.

Discussion: The present French unconventional warfare effort in Indochina is considered to be relatively ineffective.

e. Re-examine current national strategy with respect to Indochina, taking advantage of any unifying forces existing in Southeast Asia as a whole in opposition to the spread of Soviet Communism, and treating Southeast Asia as a unit with due regard to the long term objectives of the U.S. and France in the area. For further discussion, see Appendix "C".

Discussion: The Soviet Communist campaign in Southeast Asia is waged on a regional and coordinated scale, rather than separate attacks on individual countries. By forming new coalitions of Western oriented countries, certain opportunities can be expected to open up which will directly support operations in Indochina.

f. Increase the pace and scope of the U.S. information program, and the U.S. advisory activities in furtherance of the French and Associated States military psychological warfare effort in accordance with the recommendations of the senior U.S. officers on the ground. (See Appendix "D".) Consideration should be given to both unilateral action and action in conjunction with colonial French military and civil authorities, as well as indigenous leaders of Southeast Asia. The objectives should be to increase:

(1) The willingness of the people of France and the U.S. to support the prosecution of the war.

(2) The anti-Communist attitudes and active participation of the native populations.

(3) The morale of the French forces in Indochina.

Discussion: To secure the maximum benefits of our program of assistance to Indochina and, simultaneously, Southeast Asia by the cumulative and cooperative efforts of all propaganda media at the disposal of the Allies.

g. To render maximum and expeditious assistance in providing matériel and training to the French and Associated States Forces engaged in the Indochina war, the Services should be directed to accomplish (1) and (4) below and authorized to accomplish (2) and (3) below:

(1) Expedite shipment of undelivered items on FY 50–54 Programs in accordance with priority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for deliveries of MDAP.

(2) Make changes in current programs as requested by Chief, MAAG, Indochina, and make deliveries against such changes and, if deemed necessary, without prior reference to or approval of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

(3) Increase monetary value of FY 54 MDA Programs for Indochina, as may be necessary and feasible to provide additional matériel and/or training requested by Chief, MAAG, Indochina.

(4) Undertake the implementation of these instructions through such organizations and by such procedures as are considered necessary to insure prompt and effective response to valid requests for assistance.

Discussion: To date, restrictive criteria and procedures have seriously handicapped the administration of MDAP assistance in the support of the effort in Indochina. MDAP assistance is normally used to support a training and re-equipment program. In Indochina, however, such equipment is being used to support an active campaign. The purpose of the above is to free the Services of all restrictive criteria other than final legal limitation of available funds in order that prompt and effective response may be achieved in meeting all valid requests received from Chief, MAAG, Indochina.

h. Give consideration to interim revision of French NATO commitments in Europe in order to allow provision of additional French air personnel to Indochina.

Discussion: Shortage of air personnel has been one major factor in prolonging the war. A reappraisal of French NATO commitments should be considered with a view toward releasing additional French air personnel for Indochina.

i. Insure that personnel assigned to MAAG, Indochina, are qualified to advise the French Union forces on U.S. tactics and techniques.

Discussion: This would provide the benefit of U.S. battle experience for use in Indochina.

j. Consideration should be given at Governmental level to the proposition of declarations as follows:

(1) By France: A declaration of intention to prosecute the war in Indochina to a successful conclusion and looking toward the more complete independence of the Associated States of Indochina.

(2) By the United States: A declaration to the effect that positive action will be taken to prevent the conquest of Indochina by aggression originating outside of Indochina.

Discussion: A declaration of intent, as outlined above, would in general raise the morale of all peoples in Southeast Asia and in particular would increase the determination of the Indochinese to fight the war to a successful conclusion.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
F. F. EVEREST
Lieut. General, USAF,
Director, Joint Staff

S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351, NSC 5405 Series

Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Lay) [1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, January 16, 1954.]
NSC 5405

UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Communist domination, by whatever means, of all Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short term, and critically endanger in the longer term, United States security interests.

a. In the conflict in Indochina, the Communist and non-Communist worlds clearly confront one another on the field of battle. The loss of the struggle in Indochina, in addition to its impact in Southeast Asia and in South Asia, would therefore have the most serious repercussions on U.S. and free world interests in Europe and elsewhere.

. . . .

3. However, overt Chinese Communist attack on any part of Southeast Asia is less probable than continued communist efforts to achieve domination through armed rebellion or subversion. By far the most urgent threat to Southeast Asia arises from the strong possibility that

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[1] This report, prepared by the Planning Board of the National Security Council, was approved by the Council at its 180th Meeting, Jan. 14; for extracts from the memorandum of discussion at that meeting, see p. 961. NSC 5405 was approved by President Eisenhower on Jan. 16. For the full text of the report and related documentation, see volume XII.

even without overt Chinese Communist intervention the situation in Indochina may deteriorate anew as a result of weakening of the resolve of France and the Associated States of Indochina to continue to oppose the Viet Minh rebellion, the military strength of which is increased by virtue of aid furnished by the Chinese Communist and Soviet regimes. Barring overt Chinese Communist intervention or further serious deterioration in Indochina, the outlook in Burma, Thailand, and Malaya offers opportunities for some improvement in internal stability and in the control of indigenous communist forces.

4. The successful defense of Tonkin is the keystone of the defense of mainland Southeast Asia except possibly Malaya. In addition to the profound political and psychological factors involved, the retention of Tonkin in friendly hands cuts off the most feasible routes for any massive southward advance towards central and Southern Indochina and Thailand. The execution of U.S. courses of action with respect to individual countries of the area may vary depending upon the route of communist advance into Southeast Asia.

5. Since 1951 the United States has greatly increased all forms of assistance to the French in Indochina, particularly military aid, and has consulted continuously with France with a view to assuring effective use of this aid. Partly as a result of these efforts, French resumption of the initiative under the "Laniel–Navarre Plan" has checked at least temporarily deterioration of the French will to continue the struggle. Concurrently the French have moved toward perfecting the independence of the Associated States within the French Union. In September 1953 the United States decided to extend an additional $385 million in aid, in return for a number of strong French assurances, including a commitment that the French would vigorously carry forward the "Laniel–Navarre Plan", with the object of eliminating regular enemy forces in Indochina, and on the understanding that if the "Laniel–Navarre Plan" were not executed, the United States would retain the right to terminate this additional assistance. (See NSC Action No. 897, Annex B) [2]

6. The French objective in these efforts is to terminate the war as soon as possible so as to reduce the drain of the Indochina war on France and permit the maintenance of a position for France in the Far East. By a combination of military victories and political concessions to the Associated States, France hopes to strengthen these States to the point where they will be able to maintain themselves against Communist pressures with greatly reduced French aid. In the absence of a change in basic French attitudes, the Laniel–Navarre Plan may be the last French major offensive effort in Indochina. There

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[2] For the text of NSC Action No. 897, see the memorandum of discussion at the 161st Meeting of the National Security Council, Sept. 9, 1953, p. 780.

is not in sight any desirable alternative to the success of a Franco-Vietnamese effort along the lines of the "Laniel–Navarre" Plan.

7. Notwithstanding the commitment and intent of the Laniel Government to seek destruction of Viet Minh regular forces, a successor French Government might well accept an improvement in the military position short of this as a basis for serious negotiation within the next year. Political pressures in France prevent any French Government from rejecting the concept of negotiations. If the Laniel–Navarre Plan fails or appears doomed to failure, the French might seek to negotiate simply for the best possible terms, irrespective of whether these offered any assurance of preserving a non-Communist Indochina. With continued U.S. economic and material assistance, the Franco-Vietnamese forces are not in danger of being militarily defeated by the Viet Minh unless there is large-scale Chinese Communist intervention. In any event, apart from the possibility of bilateral negotiations with the Communists, the French will almost certainly continue to seek international discussion of the Indochina issue.

8. The Chinese Communists will almost certainly continue their present type of support for Viet Minh. They are unlikely to intervene with organized units even if the Viet Minh are threatened with defeat by the Franco-Vietnamese forces. In the event the United States participates in the fighting, there is a substantial risk that the Chinese Communists would intervene. The Communists may talk of peace negotiations for propaganda purposes and to divide the anti-Communists believing that any political negotiations and any settlement to which they would agree would increase their chances of eventually gaining control of Indochina.

. . . .

II. OBJECTIVE

10. To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit; to persuade them that their best interests lie in greater cooperation and stronger affiliations with the rest of the free world; and to assist them to develop toward stable, free governments with the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world.

. . . .

III. COURSES OF ACTION

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B. *Indochina*

In the Absence of Chinese Communist Aggression

21. Without relieving France of its basic responsibility for the defense of the Associated States, expedite the provision of, and if

necessary increase, aid to the French Union forces, under the terms of existing commitments, to assist them in:

a. An aggressive military, political and psychological program, including covert operations, to eliminate organized Viet Minh forces by mid-1955.

b. Developing indigenous armed forces, including independent logistical and administrative services, which will eventually be capable of maintaining internal security without assistance from French units.

Toward this end, exert all feasible influence to improve the military capabilities of the French Union–Associated States forces, including improved training of local forces, effective command and intelligence arrangements, and the reposing of increased responsibility on local military leaders.

22. Continue to assure France that: (1) the United States is aware that the French effort in Indochina is vital to the preservation of the French Union and of great strategic importance to the security of the free world; (2) the United States is fully aware of the sacrifices France is making; and (3) U.S. support will continue so long as France continues to carry out its primary responsibility in Indochina.

23. Encourage further steps by both France and the Associated States to produce a working relationship based on equal sovereignty within the general framework of the French Union. These steps should take into account France's primary responsibility for the defense of Indochina.

a. Support the development of more effective and stable governments in the Associated States, thus making possible the reduction of French participation in the affairs of the States.

b. Urge the French to organize their administration and representation in Indochina with a view to increasing the feeling of responsibility on the part of the Associated States.

c. Seek to persuade the Associated States that it is not in their best interest to undermine the French position by making untimely demands.

d. Cooperate with the French and the Associated States in publicizing progress toward achieving the foregoing policies.

24. Continue to promote international recognition and support for the Associated States.

25. Employ every feasible means to influence the French government and people against any conclusion of the struggle on terms inconsistent with basic U.S. objectives. In doing so, the United States should make clear:

a. The effect on the position of France itself in North Africa, in Europe, and as a world power.

b. The free world stake in Indochina.

c. The impact of the loss of Indochina upon the over-all strategy of France's free world partners.

26. Reiterate to the French:

a. That in the absence of a marked improvement in the military situation there is no basis for negotiation with any prospect for acceptable terms.

b. That a nominally non-Communist coalition regime would eventually turn the country over to Ho Chi Minh with no opportunity for the replacement of the French by the United States or the United Kingdom.

27. Flatly oppose any idea of a cease-fire as a preliminary to negotiations, because such a cease-fire would result in an irretrievable deterioration of the Franco-Vietnamese military position in Indochina.

28. If it appears necessary, insist that the French consult the Vietnamese and obtain their approval of all actions related to any response to Viet Minh offers to negotiate.

29. If the French actually enter into negotiations with the communists, insist that the United States be consulted and seek to influence the course of the negotiations.

30. In view of the possibility of large-scale Chinese Communist intervention, and in order that the United States may be prepared to take whatever action may be appropriate in such circumstances, continue to keep current the plans necessary to carry out the courses of action indicated in paragraphs 31 and 32 below. In addition, seek UK and French advance agreement in principle that a naval blockade of Communist China should be included in the courses of military action set forth in paragraph 31 below.

In the Event of Chinese Communist Intervention

31. If the United States, France and the Associated States determine that Chinese Communist forces (including volunteers) have overtly intervened in Indochina, or are covertly participating so as to jeopardize holding the Tonkin delta area, the United States (following consultation with France, the Associated States, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand) should take the following measures to assist French Union forces to repel the aggression, to hold Indochina and to restore its security and peace:

a. Support a request by France or the Associated States that the United Nations take immediate actions, including a resolution that Communist China had committed an aggression and a recommendation that member states take whatever action may be necessary, without geographic limitations, to assist France and the Associated States to meet such aggression.

b. Whether or not the United Nations so acts, seek the maximum international support for participation in military courses of action required by the situation.

c. Carry out the following minimum courses of military action, either under UN auspices or as part of a joint effort with France, the UK, and any other friendly governments:

(1) Provide, as may be practicable, air and naval assistance for a resolute defense of Indochina itself: calling upon France and the Associated States to provide ground forces.

(2) Provide the major forces to interdict Chinese Communist communication lines, including those in China; calling upon the UK and France to provide token forces and such other assistance as is normal among allies.

(3) Provide logistical support to other participating nations as may be necessary.

d. Take the following additional actions, if appropriate to the situation:

(1) If agreed pursuant to paragraph 30 above, establish jointly with the UK and France a naval blockade of Communist China.

(2) Intensify covert operations to aid guerrilla forces against Communist China and to interfere with and disrupt Chinese Communist lines of communication.

(3) Utilize, as desirable and feasible, Chinese National forces in military operations in Southeast Asia, Korea, or China proper.

(4) Assist the British in Hong Kong, as desirable and feasible.

(5) Evacuate French Union civil and military personnel from the Tonkin delta, if required.

32. *a.* If, after taking the actions outlined in paragraph 31–*c* above, the United States, the UK and France determine jointly that expanded military action against Communist China is necessary, the United States, in conjunction with at least France and the UK, should take air and naval action against all suitable military targets in China which directly contribute to the war in Indochina, avoiding insofar as practicable targets near the USSR boundaries.

b. If the UK and France do not agree to such expanded military action, the United States should consider taking such action unilaterally.

33. If action is taken under paragraph 32, the United States should recognize that it may become involved in an all-out war with Communist China, and possibly with the USSR and the rest of the Soviet bloc, and should therefore proceed to take large-scale mobilization measures.

. . . .

711.551/1–1754 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, January 17, 1954—4:56 p.m.

1269. For information only. At its January 8 meeting NSC took following action:[2]

> "Agreed that General O'Daniel should be stationed continuously in Indochina, under appropriate liaison arrangements and with sufficient authority to expedite the flexible provision of US assistance to the French Union forces."

Purpose is to have O'Daniel function as CINCPAC's liaison with Navarre. He would keep close contact with American Ambassador. Purpose of assignment would be to correlate US assistance and influence more closely than heretofore with demands of Indochina situation particularly in relation over-all strategy and training of native troops in order to make maximum contribution to successful conclusion.

As first step in implementation above NSC action, General O'Daniel is proceeding to make visit MAAGs in FE area beginning with MAAG/Saigon about January 25 (he will communicate directly with MAAG and has already advised Navarre informally of his plan). After a few days in Saigon, O'Daniel would proceed to Bangkok, Manila and Taipei returning later to Saigon for further discussion with General Navarre. Further steps will depend upon course O'Daniel conversations with Navarre. It is hoped that O'Daniel can persuade Navarre of desirability of O'Daniel's indefinite stay in Indochina as contemplated by NSC and that Navarre will in fact make suitable recommendation to his government.

Meanwhile no action is required from addressees. Inquiries regarding O'Daniel plans should be answered to effect he is on routine visit to MAAGs in FE area for which he has administrative responsibilities as Commanding General U.S. Army Pacific. You will be kept closely informed on progress O'Daniel conversations with Navarre.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Also sent to Paris as telegram 2546.

[2] For extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the meeting of the National Security Council on Jan. 8, see p. 947.

751G.11/1–1854 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, January 18, 1954—6 p.m.

1265. Repeated information Paris 385, Hanoi unnumbered. Had long talk with Bao Dai yesterday and have never seen him more confident and pleased with situation. While new government, he said, had no names of great prestige, it was government of young, able, reliable and devoted men. He mentioned especially Quat, Le Thang and Dac Khe.[2] Latter had ability, courage and decisiveness. He talked a little too much and, Bao Dai remarked with chuckle, in spite of his independence, he was always ill at ease and over-embarrassed in his, Bao Dai's, presence. Le Thang was very intelligent and resourceful, and Quat was really first class and loyal. It was true that Tran Van Tuyen[3] had taken public stand announcing he was not member of government, but Tuyen had asked Bao Dai to attach him to imperial cabinet, and Bao Dai intended to do so since Tuyen was ingenious and active.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in three parts.

Without asserting that present government was an ideal one, he could trust it, both from standpoint of loyalty and certainty that it would not make any blunders. He said every time he left for France he feared that Tam would do or say something that would cause trouble for which he would have to bear blame since he could not disavow his appointed chief of government. He was also thoroughly satisfied with De Jean and Navarre. (Ung An, Bao Dai representative in Saigon, told me that though formation of government has required 20 days, De Jean had never tried to "mix in" the matter. Previous French High Commissioners he alleged had always attempted to intervene in greater or lesser degree in Vietnamese Government changes. (Bao Dai said he was already in substantial agreement with De Jean as to main points of negotiation with France.) Vietnam had only two new things to ask of France, for Bao Dai considered that transfer of services and powers still in French hands had already been granted in principle by French declaration of July 3. Bao Dai wanted name of French Union changed to Union of Associated States. De Jean had agreed, but both realized that this change of name might encounter opposition in French parliament. He had suggested to De Jean that he (De Jean) leave for France before long to try to "sell" this proposal. Second Vietnamese request was for abolition of Ministry of Associated States and placing Vietnamese Relations in French Foreign Office. (With this De Jean is privately in hearty agreement).

There would be no difficulty about counter-privileges and advantages for France which were clearly promised in Buu Loc's speech at inauguration dinner on 16th. He hoped that speech would reassure French as to sincerity his gratitude for French sacrifices in IC.

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[2] Reference is to Phan Huy Quat, the Minister of Defense; Le Thang, the Minister of Information; and Nguyen Dac Khe, Minister Attached to the Presidency of the Government in Charge of National Democratization.

[3] Tran Van Tuyen, Vietnamese nationalist; Secretary General of the League for National Resistance.

As regards continuation of military and customs arrangements among AS, he understood from De Jean that France would be willing to step out of present quadripartite arrangements and allow AS negotiate new tripartite arrangements. Vietnam was quite willing carry on with customs union provided Cambodia wished. I remarked that in my last talk with Cambodian King, latter seemed to be reconsidering his position of last summer against continuation of customs and economic arrangements with other AS. Bao Dai said he must have a meeting with King, whom he has known for good many years. Vietnam had no designs against Cambodia; on contrary, it would like cooperate militarily and in all other ways.

Bao Dai said he expected to negotiate these matters with De Jean (and presumably with Jacquet who arrives January 19) so that sending of delegation to Paris would be essentially a ceremonial signing of agreements already reached in principle or in detail.

Aside from conclusion of future contractual arrangements with France, he (Bao Dai) wished to negotiate away any objections France might have toward establishment of Vietnamese diplomatic relations with Japan and Nationalist China. Bao Dai said only reason for long delay in establishing relations with Japan was Tam's somewhat anti-Japanese attitude. He did not anticipate any particular French objections to Vietnamese diplomatic relations with Japan. In case of recognition of Nationalist China which he, Bao Dai, favored, he was afraid lest French might object that this might be taken as a provocation by Communist China and decide latter to direct intervention in IC war. He personally thought that fear was without foundation and inquired as to US attitude toward such recognition.

I informed [him] that on instructions from my government, I had already answered a Laotian inquiry by stating that I viewed such recognition as a logical, advantageous step for Laos and we felt it would be equally logical and advantageous for Vietnam. My government has not so far urged this point of view on either Vietnam or France presumably in view of military responsibilities of France for protection of IC. Bao Dai said he thought US should use its influence with France to persuade her to withdraw any objection to Vietnam's diplomatic relations with Formosa. He then inquired whether Formosa really wanted to establish such relations with Vietnam, and I replied that it was my belief that it did and the Formosa had already, I understood, made certain overtures to Laos and Cambodia. When I had seen Chiang Kai-shek in December, latter had charged me particularly to convey his friendly greetings to Bao Dai, telling him that he was following with interest and sympathy developments here.

Bao Dai and I then discussed difficulties of government and attaining national unity in Vietnam. There was no aristocracy on whom he could rely. Political parties were only little groups of leaders or would-be leaders without popular following. This was less true of Dai Viet and Bao Dai repeated his confidence in ability and loyalty of such Dai Viet leaders as Quat and Le Thang. Catholic Church was an element of stability and would probably favor a truly national government of monarchical character. It was not true that Bishop Thuc and his brother, Ngo Dinh Diem, were against Bao Dai and monarchy because of family rivalry. As matter of fact, Bao Dai said, Ngo Dinh Diem, despite his attitude of opposition, was former mandarin and had certain "nostalgia" to return to his former connection with monarchy. It was true that other religious groups, Cao Daist and Hoa Haos, were uncertain in their loyalty and ambitions, but this, Bao Dai thought, was largely fault of French who still were paying their confessional troops. Certain French military authorities could not, he said give up idea of retaining these mercenary troops under French control. I suggested it might be possible to negotiate discontinuance of France paying these troops. Bao Dai said that when that stopped, he would not have much difficulty in keeping these two sects and their "armies" in line.

He went on to say that so-called "elite of Vietnam" were an element that could not be depended on. He had agreed that Buu Loc should see all "fence-sitting" Nationalist leaders, but he felt certain in advance that, in spite of their protestations of desire to achieve national unity and of loyalty to Bao Dai, they would not enter into government. His premonitions had been confirmed. He attributed their continued refusal to work with government largely to their fear of accepting any responsibility.

Real support of monarchy, Bao Dai argued, was among the peasants. That had always been case, even when as in former times monarch was "invisible" to masses.

He thought that eventual form of Vietnamese Government might well be along American lines. Privy council, which he had appointed and which I hoped ex-presidents Tam and Huu would join, would be precursor of something like our Senate or House of Lords; a check on National Assembly which would eventually be elected. Parliamentary democracy had worked in England, he said, because of attachment to throne and slight "brake" afforded by House of Lords. It certainly did not work in France, to his very great regret, because French were great people of genius and ability. He greatly fears that if within 2 years France did not solve its governmental problems, she would be in great economic and political difficulties, with Communists perhaps well entrenched. Bao Dai expressed interest in powers and role of our Supreme Court. I remarked that as an American I naturally thought that our governmental system was worth studying, but of course, eventual governmental system in Vietnam should take into account traditions and structure of the country.

Bao Dai said that he expected to go to France before long. His chronic malady of liverflukes was yielding to treatment, but his newest affliction was boils for which so far local physicians had not found remedy. He mentioned his afflictions humorously and only in response to my question as to state of his health.

HEATH

PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina"

Memorandum by C. D. Jackson, Special Assistant to the President[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, January 18, 1954.

Indo-China and Southeast Asia

At a meeting in the President's office Saturday, January 16th, attended by The President, Secretary Dulles, General Smith, Admiral Davis, Mr. Kyes, and C. D. Jackson, General Smith initiated an extended discussion on the problems of Indo-China, Thailand, and the entire Southeast Asia area.

The upshot of the meeting was that the President directed General Smith, Roger Kyes, Admiral Radford, Allen Dulles, and C. D. Jackson to constitute themselves a group immediately to undertake an analysis of Southeast Asian problem and to produce an action plan for the area.

The President specifically stated that he considered this group a self-contained one to recommend the necessary action, and that neither NSC nor OCB need be cut in on its deliberations.

The following, in very broad terms, is the line of the discussion developed at the meeting with the President:

1. We consider that a defeat in Indo-China could very easily be the prelude to real disaster for our side in the whole Southeast Asian area.
2. As evidence of the importance which we attach to the Indo-Chinese struggle, this country is prepared to put up $800-million worth of military aid to France for the war in Indo-China during Fiscal '54, and will recommend matching that sum in Fiscal '55.
3. Yet all are agreed that neither American dollars, nor French gallantry, nor American hardware, can achieve victory. The key to victory is dedicated participation on the part of native (Vietnam) troops in the struggle. This is not just our idea, but is the central proposal of the Navarre Plan.
4. Despite unanimity of opinion on this score, the training of Vietnamese soldiers is precisely where things are going wrong in a big way.

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[1] This memorandum was directed to Allen Dulles, the Director of Central Intelligence; Roger Kyes, the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Admiral Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Under Secretary of State Smith.

All reports, including a recent one in General Smith's possession, indicate that the failure to train Vietnamese soldiers is a French failure, variously attributed either to French "weariness" or stubborn French military pride against accepting any outside advice on modern training methods, or sub-conscious or secret French reluctance to train native cadres who might some day turn against them.

5. Our efforts to cope with all these problems, though large-scale and sincere, have suffered from a certain amount of scatteration and lack of coordinated *area* planning. Among actions now in process, or under discussion, are:

(*a*) An $800-million annual military aid program to the French.

(*b*) The assignment of General O'Daniel under MAAG to attempt to get the French to use U.S. Officers or to turn over to the U.S. the Vietnamese training program.

(*c*) Diplomatic pressure on the French to allow us to be more than unwelcome observers on the Vietnamese training program.

(*d*) The assignment of General Donovan as Ambassador to Thailand, with the idea that Thailand would constitute a bastion if Indo-China fell.[2] Inherent in this move was the possibility of a Thai-Burmese-Cambodian regional defense pact, and our support thereof.

> 1. However, our Thai plans have never really gone beyond the geographical frontiers of Thailand, although the Thai plan was originally conceived of as an *area* plan using Thailand as a secure, sympathetic-to-the-U.S. base.

(*e*) Consideration of replacing Ambassador Heath by someone more experienced in this kind of problem and less susceptible to French neuroses.

. . . .

(*g*) Similarly, to break through French stubborn refusal to permit guerrilla training for current use in Indo-China.

> 1. Here we not only have French trouble, but also a U.S. problem, in that real guerrilla training and operation seems to fall somewhere *between* CIA and Defense, and as JFD has said, "there exists an unfilled gap in our machinery to handle guerrilla activities".

(*h*) A variety of ideas to use General Erskine,[3] General Van Fleet, in various capacities in this work.

6. The President wants the group to pull all of this together and come up with a plan in specific terms, covering who does what and with which and to whom. He made the specific point that what was really lacking was an *area* plan, including the possible alternative lines of action to be taken in case of a reverse in Indo-China, or elsewhere in the area.

C. D. JACKSON

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[2] For documentation on this subject, see volume XII.

[3] Gen. Graves B. Erskine, USMC (ret.), Director of the Office of Special Operations, Department of Defense.

751G.00/1–1854

Memorandum by Roderic L. O'Connor, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, to the Counselor (MacArthur)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 18, 1954.

The President called the Secretary and in his absence talked to General Smith to stress the point that he wants nothing said to Bidault or any other member of the French Delegation [1] about possible increased military assistance in Indochina until we have had some report from our own people who are going out there.

R[ODERIC] L. O'C[ONNOR]

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[1] Reference is to the Four-Power Foreign Ministers Conference which convened at Berlin on Jan. 25; see editorial note, p. 997.

751G.00/1–1954 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, January 19, 1954—2 p. m.

2668. Repeated information Saigon 284. Following is free translation of letter signed by Prime Minister and received at Embassy January 18 under covering letter from Foreign Office (Embtel 2663).[1]

Text follows:

"Mr. Ambassador, I had the honor several days ago to ask you to be good enough to inform your government on an exceptional basis, of a request for aid in reinforcing each of the two groups of B–26 bomber aircraft at present in Indochina (by raising the number of planes in each group from 16 to 25).

"Following that request, of primary urgency, I ask you to note, as set forth here below, a group of new requests which, taking into account its obligations in Europe and the overseas territories, the French Air Force is not able to satisfy and for which the aid of the Government of the US appears to be indispensable.

"The Navarre plan, in assuring the defense of the Tonkin delta, has made it necessary for the Viet Minh High Command to give up its original plans and share its efforts between the Thai country and the Mekong. In dealing with these two zones, which are at the moment extremely sensitive, both the distance and the difficulties of the terrain make it necessary for us to use air transport. There, therefore, results a great increase in the demand for transport aircraft.

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[1] In telegram 2663 from Paris, Jan. 19, not printed, Achilles reported that the letter from Premier Laniel had been received from Maurice Schumann, French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the previous afternoon. Achilles pointed out that U.S. crews were not being requested. (751G.00/1–954) The Embassy transmitted the texts of the letter, dated Jan. 18, and the Embassy's note of acknowledgment of receipt, as enclosures to despatch 1840, Jan. 20. (751G.00/1–2054)

In an *aide-mémoire* of Jan. 18, the French Embassy in Washington advised the Department of State of the communication from Premier Laniel to Ambassador Dillon and summarized its contents. (751G.5/1–1854)

"On the other hand, the rebel forces move now only at night. They are now supplied with antiaircraft armament of a greatly increased efficiency. These two factors combine in rendering the action of our fighter-bombers less effective and more expensive. There follows the necessity of increasing the amount of bombing which can be done at night while at the same time attacking well-defensed objectives from the air by day.

"Toward this objective the following aid is asked from the Government of the US.

"That part which concerns transport: The maintenance at the disposition of General Navarre, for the length of the present campaign, of 12 C–119 aircraft already loaned to the French High Command in Indochina and the supplying of the necessary technical support which the planes require (specialized personnel and spare parts) to the exclusion of the crews. This detachment would be used for heavy transport over long distances and would make it possible to devote the four groups of C–47 aircraft to operational transport and, in particular, to the spreading of airlifted reserves to which the Commander-in-Chief attaches the greatest importance.

"As concerns bombing: Experience has shown that the operational results of the B–26 at present in Indochina can be improved by a considerable margin if their supply spare parts coming from the US, at the present time the only place where they can be obtained, is assured in a manner which is both more ample in quantity and more regular in delivery. It is, therefore, asked that your government be good enough to take the necessary steps to assure that this supply is effected more promptly than in the past.

"On the other hand, the High Command considers that its military strength will be considerably increased and will make it possible for us to face the present situation if the High Command has at its disposal a third group of 25 B–26 aircraft, under condition that the technical support of the group can be assured favorably. Thus the problem of personnel for this third group arises. As far as the crews are concerned, the French Air Force will be able to furnish them after a period of instruction in B–26 in Europe or North Africa, but it is necessary that the American Government supply the specialist ground force personnel which is indispensable to the placing in operation of this formation. These specialists, who will not be employed on operational missions, should be sent to Indochina as civilians.

"The evolution of the war in Indochina leads us to believe, for the reasons indicated at the beginning of this letter, that the air branch of our forces will, within the next three months, take on a much greater importance than it has had in the past. It is thus indispensable to make a new effort to obtain the maximum service from all air matériel at our disposal in the theater. In this regard I ask you to submit to the appropriate American authorities the following suggestion: Would it be possible for the American Government to place at the disposition of General Navarre a force of approximately 400 specialists in the maintenance and repair of B–26 and C–47 aircraft according to the detailed specifications which will be furnished by the Commander-in-Chief directly to MAAG Saigon? These specialists, serving as civilians, would not take part in any operations. Their service together with the reinforcement of French specialists who have already been or are designated to be sent will make it possible to increase the efficiency of the transport and bomber units in Indochina at the present time to the extent of approximately 30 percent.

"It is finally pointed out that the aid in personnel asked of the American Government is of a purely temporary character and that this personnel will be restored to the American authorities as soon as possible.

"In closing, I beg your attention to the question of the urgency of these measures which I ask you to pass on to the American Government with the least delay possible.

"I attach importance to the fact that the other requests for technical matériel and ammunition which have already been passed to the MAAG at Saigon by General Navarre be fulfilled with priority because of the pressing necessities of the current battle.

"Please accept, Mr. Ambassador, the assurances of my highest consideration. Signed Joseph Laniel."

ACHILLES

S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351, NSC 5405 Series

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 20, 1954.

Subject: Paper prepared by JCS and CIA for submission by Secretary of Defense to NSC in response to NSC Action 1005–*c* on the subject of "All feasible further steps short of the overt use of US forces in combat which the US might take to assist in achieving the success of the 'Laniel–Navarre' Plan" in Indochina.[2]

Admiral Radford will present this paper at the Jan. 21 NSC meeting. The steps proposed may be divided between (*a*) measures desired by the French covering immediate matériel and personnel requirements in the present combat situation, and (*b*) measures urged by the US as likely to improve the over-all military-political situation. With regard to the French requirement for 400 American specialized personnel in civilian capacity to service B–26s and C–47s, the paper takes the position that US military or civilian personnel should not be provided "except in certain highly specialized categories". It is understood, however, that this matter is being further explored in Defense.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.

[2] For the paper under reference, dated Jan. 15, see p. 968.

Recommendations

It is recommended that NSC take affirmative action on short term requirements and provide for prompt further handling of longer term concepts advanced. Specifically, it is recommended:

1. That State endorse decision providing funds making 35 B–26s available in Indochina prior to March 1st and heartily support proposed streamlining of MDAP procedures.
2. That matter of 400 additional mechanics be handled by (*a*) asking Gen. Gruenther to report on whether these can be obtained from French sources by reducing French NATO requirements or otherwise; and (*b*) by asking Defense to make necessary preparations for the provision, if necessary, of these 400 mechanics on temporary duty basis (in civilian dress?) in Indochina by March 1.
3. That further study be given the proposed organization of a volunteer air group for service in Indochina. (Perhaps NATO Standing Group could be helpful.)
4. That further effort be made to persuade French to step up unconventional warfare activities. CIA might be asked to provide Secretary with briefing paper so that this can be discussed with Bidault at Berlin.
5. That State concur in recommendation that "proposed re-examination of current national strategy regarding Indochina" be submitted to NSC Planning Board for further study.
6. That OCB ensure appropriate action on proposals to step up informational activities and psychological warfare activities in Indochina and on a regional basis.
7. That State take a negative position regarding two declarations proposed in the paper. The French Government will not now make a public declaration that it will pursue the war to a successful conclusion; the French have done all they can be required to do on the matter of independence of Associated States. A further declaration by the US on what we would do in the event of outside aggression against Indochina would tend to depreciate the value of such declarations.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 181st Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, January 21, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 181st Meeting of the National Security Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Secretary of State; the Acting Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. The Vice President did not attend the meeting because of his absence from the city. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General (for Item 6); Mr. Morrison for the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the U.S. Representative to the United Nations; the Under Secretary of State; the Acting Secretary of the Army and Adm. Duncan for the Secretary of the Navy (for Item 4); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. Bolte for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, and the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps (for Item 4); Judge Barnes, Assistant Attorney General, and Mr. Herbert Hoover, Jr., Department of State (for Item 6); the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler and C. D. Jackson, Special Assistants to the President; the Deputy Assistant to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Jan. 22.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

. . . .

4. *United States objectives and courses of action with respect to Southeast Asia* (NSC 5405; NSC Actions Nos. 1005–*d* and 1011–*b*)[2]

At the beginning of the discussion of this item, Mr. Cutler pointed out that some confusion existed as to who was responsible for carrying out NSC Actions Nos. 1005–*d* and 1011–*b*. In the first instance, the Council decided to refer to the same high-level committee both the problem of further feasible steps to assist in achieving the objectives of the "Laniel–Navarre" Plan (NSC Action No. 1005–*d*) and the problem of longer-range plans for the contingency of a French defeat or abandonment of Indochina (NSC Action No. 1011–*b*). Mr. Cutler then requested the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to make his oral report on possible further measures to assist in achieving the success of the Laniel–Navarre Plan which had been worked out during the past week with the Director of Central Intelligence.

Before referring to his report, Admiral Radford said that he had a point which bore on the problem which he would like to present to the Council. He then said that some three years ago, when he was CINCPAC, he had been ordered to make contact with General DeLattre and to talk over with him plans to cover U.S. assistance in the evacuation of the French Union forces from the Tonkin delta in the event that they were forced to abandon this position. DeLattre had at that time observed that in his opinion it was preposterous to talk about an evacuation of French Union forces from Tonkin. Before they could ever get out, they and their Vietnamese friends would all have been massacred. Admiral Radford stated that General DeLattre's position was sound, and that there was very little point in talking about a French abandonment of Indochina.

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[2] For extracts from NSC 5405, Jan. 16, see p. 971. For NSC Action No. 1005, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 179th Meeting of the NSC, Jan. 8, p. 947. For NSC Action No. 1011, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 180th Meeting of the NSC, Jan. 14, p. 961.

With regard to the report on further measures to assist the Navarre Plan, Admiral Radford stated that the JCS paper [3] had been written in collaboration with the CIA and had been very hurriedly formulated. If it were possible for the Council to extend the time, the contents of the report could be greatly improved. It was his understanding that Secretary Kyes did not agree with all the measures suggested. Moreover, General O'Daniel would soon be in Indochina, and it would be very valuable to have a report at once from him on what further steps might usefully be taken.

Admiral Radford pointed out that certain measures of further assistance are already in train. He felt that it was probable that we could mount a "Flying Tiger" operation, as discussed at last week's Council meeting, though this would be a very expensive undertaking. Also, Admiral Radford wanted to urge the French to step up their efforts in guerrilla warfare.

Finally, Admiral Radford said he wished to submit any report on further measures to assist the French, to the new high-level committee [4] for its views prior to final Council action upon it.

Mr. Allen Dulles said that he understood that the new high-level committee had been set up to deal with the problems of Southeast Asia as a whole. He greatly regretted the possibility that steps which needed to be taken promptly with specific regard to Indochina should necessarily be held up while the new committee deliberated on the whole Southeast Asia area. . . .

Mr. Cutler said that he did not understand that there was any need for delay, and the President said he did not want any delay, indicating that he was anxious that the new high-level committee convene at once in order to figure out additional measures to assist the French. Above all, Indochina, the President insisted, must not be allowed to go by default.

Mr. Cutler pointed out that there was no need for the new high-level committee to report its findings to the Council, since it would be concerned with operational questions rather than policy guidance. Accordingly, the committee could proceed to carry out its own agreed additional measures.

Admiral Radford stated that so far as psychological measures and unconventional warfare were concerned, . . . What concerned him most, . . . was just how much time we have. He was inclined to feel that the press had exaggerated the emergency in French Indochina, and that things were not as bad as they were represented. He proposed to have General O'Daniel report on this question just as soon as feasible.

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[3] Dated Jan. 15, p. 968.

[4] Regarding the committee under reference, see text of NSC Action No. 1019, below.

Mr. Allen Dulles reminded the members of the Council that psychological operations and the training of guerrillas were long-term operations which required lengthy advance preparation.

Secretary Smith then referred to Premier Laniel's letter to the President,[5] which had just been received in the State Department, and which requested 35 additional B–26 planes, the continued loan of the C–119 planes, and some 400 repair and maintenance personnel, all to be delivered prior to March 1. Secretary Smith noted that a reply to this letter would have to be prepared promptly.

The President, turning to General Twining, inquired whether it would cause much trouble to respond favorably to the French request. The President presumed that we could, without undue difficulty, find 400 maintenance personnel from our own Air Force.

General Twining and Admiral Radford pointed out, however, that we could not use personnel of our own Air Force, but would have to hire civilians, a process which might be difficult and time-consuming.

Secretary Smith also questioned the wisdom of substituting American personnel in NATO in order to relieve the French and permit them to send their own maintenance crews to Indochina. This course of action would require heavy pressure on the French by General Gruenther, and might result in the grounding of a considerable number of French planes in Europe.

The President expressed his view that we should at least provide the French with some supervisors, though not with the maintenance personnel. If we provided a group of 25 or 26 supervisors and gave the French 35 B–26 planes, the French ought to be able to dig up 400 additional mechanics.

In reply to the President's suggestion, Secretary Smith said that he and Admiral Radford would get together on a reply to Laniel on Saturday.

Admiral Radford indicated his desire to have a little more time to consider the whole matter of further measures to assist the French in securing the objectives of the Navarre Plan. Not least of these considerations, said Admiral Radford, was the possibility of getting a useful *quid pro quo* from the French in return for fulfilling this most recent request. The President said he was agreeable to this solution, but he wanted the planes made ready to go when the decision was made.

The President went on to criticize French military strategy in Indochina in view of the large number of battalions immobilized in the

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[5] Reference is to the letter from Premier Laniel to Ambassador Dillon, dated Jan. 18 and transmitted to Washington in telegram 2668 from Paris, Jan. 19, p. 983.

Tonkin delta at the moment that the French strongpoint at Dien Bien Phu was heavily invested by the Vietminh.

. . . .

The National Security Council:[6]

Noted that the President had directed a Special Committee, consisting of the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence:

a. To determine urgently further feasible steps to assist in achieving the success of the "Laniel–Navarre" Plan in accordance with NSC 5405, including consideration of the report prepared by the Department of Defense in collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency pursuant to NSC Action No. 1005–*d.* (The Committee will utilize the facilities of and report to the Operations Coordinating Board on this assignment.)

b. To develop longer-range plans for possible future contingencies in Southeast Asia not covered by NSC 5405, including those suggested by the Secretary of State and previously assigned to the Director of Central Intelligence by NSC Action No. 1011–*b.* (The Committee will utilize the facilities of the Operations Coordinating Board and report to the National Security Council on this assignment.)

Note: The above action subsequently transmitted to the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence for appropriate implementation.

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[6] The paragraph below and its lettered subsections constituted NSC Action No. 1019. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

751G.5622/1–2154 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, January 21, 1954—5 p. m.

2697. Repeated information priority Saigon 290. Saigon 1284 (Paris 391) January 20.[1] Maurice Schumann handed me note this morning regarding the provision of additional B–26 aircraft for IC, a free translation of which follows:

"January 4 Laniel addressed letter Ambassador emphasizing urgency of request presented in December 1953 by French Command to MAAG Saigon with view to increasing number aircraft in two B-26 groups IC from 16 to 25. (This in reference Laniel letter transmitted Embassy telegram 2503, Saigon 256 (January 5).)

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[1] The reference telegram read in part as follows: "1. Jacquet, Ambassador Dejean and General Bodet met with General Trapnell and me [Ambassador Heath] this afternoon to urge US send immediately ten B–26 light bombers either as gift or loan. Trapnell is recommending urgently. These ten B–26s plus seven more regularly programmed B–26s scheduled to arrive Saigon about January 25 would provide 17 additional B–26s which will absolutely be needed if, as expected, Viet Minh attack Dien Bien Phu in the next few days. At present French Air Force here has only 39 B–26s." (751G.5622/1–2054)

"Heath and Trapnell have made known Jacquet, presently on mission Saigon, that seven B-26 aircraft would be delivered about January 25, or 26. No notice further deliveries has been given thus far. Heath and Trapnell have however indicated to Jacquet that General Weyland awaited only authorization from Washington to dispatch to IC about ten B-26's which are available Korea. (Foregoing appears to be in line paragraph 1 reference telegram.)[2]

"In view imminence Viet Minh attack Dien Bien Phu, the Secretary of State urges that necessary orders be given urgently by US Government to General Weyland".

Schumann emphasized to me personally urgency with which this matter viewed by French Government in view proximity anticipated attack Dien Bien Phu.

ACHILLES

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[2] Telegram 1298 from Saigon, Jan. 22, repeated to Paris for information as telegram 396, read as follows: "There is a slight correction to be made in Paris 2697 to Department of January 21. General Trapnell and I did not tell Jacquet that Weyland was only waiting authorization from Washington to dispatch on 10 B-26's. We only said that Japan would be probable source of planes if Washington approved request." (751G.5622/1-2254)

751G.00/1-2254 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, January 22, 1954—7 p. m.

1290. Repeated information Paris 392, Hanoi unnumbered. Jacquet told me yesterday (see my Top Secret telegram 1284, January 20)[1] that in his view it was absolutely necessary for Navarre to produce some victories within next few months or pressure of opposition in French Parliament to continuation of French effort in Indochina would force any government in power to initiate negotiations with Ho Chi Minh. He well understood that it was hardly in the cards for Navarre to win any truly decisive victories in this period since two forces were nearly balanced, but victories of some degree must occur. Best thing that could happen would be for Viet Minh to attack Dien Bien Phu as they are expected to do and have French inflict a bloody defeat on them. That would greatly diminish French opposition to war in Indochina.

He also realized that it would probably be difficult or impossible to conclude an armistice with Ho Chi Minh which would be acceptable either to Vietnamese or French and that it would be impossible for France suddenly to withdraw its forces. Nevertheless, if defeats occurred or there were no victorious engagements in next few months opposition would insist on a try at negotiations.

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[1] For partial text, see footnote 1, *supra*.

He, Jacquet, thought there was little or no hope of success in negotiations with Ho Chi Minh but that it might be possible negotiate successfully with Communist China to cease aiding Viet Minh. To his request for my opinion, I said I regretted I saw no possible negotiations or any *quid pro quo* which could be given which would induce China really to desist from supporting Viet Minh.

Jacquet then went on to say he saw no possibility of decisive defeat of Viet Minh unless there were eventually American participation, say in form of "foreign legion" with American flyers, mechanics, and technical warfare specialists. He said that Alsop article which was denounced Paris and Washington was not really so short of truth. French Government had very seriously considered suggesting to American Government formation of a so-called "foreign legion" of America's flyers and specialists, but had refrained from formulating demand on "information" that such a request would cause difficulties for American Government and be turned down. Jacquet insisted, however, that something along this line would eventually have to be tried.

Jacquet then expressed disappointment with new Vietnamese Government. It would be unable, he alleged, to rally nationwide support. Bao Dai should, he said, already be casting around for successor government capable of rallying nation and Jacquet intimated he planned to say this to Bao Dai. Furthermore, Bao Dai must provide more active leadership. I told Jacquet that new government was obviously not an ideal one from standpoint of rallying nation but nevertheless might enjoy some success. As for Bao Dai, I feared he had to be taken much as he was. His performance would I thought improve, but one could not expect him to be suddenly transformed into a Clemenceau.

HEATH

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Vietnam Correspondence"

The Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Ambassador at Saigon (Heath)

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] January 22, 1954.

DEAR DON: A good deal has been going on in the Indochina field lately. I have been unsuccessful because of "circumstances beyond my control" in keeping you fully advised. In fact, the only specific information you have had so far is contained in our message regarding Mike O'Daniel's plans.[1] Getting that one out was not simple. I am therefore writing you in this personal, eyes only, fashion to see if I can give you at least the flavor of what is happening here.

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[1] See telegram 1269 to Saigon, Jan. 17, p. 977.

We have been struggling on the preparation of a new NSC paper to take the place of NSC 124/2. [2] That paper has now been approved by the President and I am seeing to it that copies are forwarded to you. It fully covers our present policies toward Indochina and in fact gives added support to the vigorous prosecution of the "enterprises" within present lines.

Recent military developments, however, have caused serious soul-searching in the highest quarters as to whether the present general approach is sufficient and also as to whether we should or can make any preparations for what we would do in the event of a failure of the "enterprise" due to military or to political factors. There have been a number of top level conversations on this subject. My information in regard thereto is incomplete.

The first result of these conversations was the NSC action with regard to General O'Daniel which I have already reported to you. This action was taken with no advance warning to or consultation of the lower echelons in Defense or State so far as I am aware. I saw Mike O'Daniel briefly here last week. He does not have a very clear idea as yet of what he is going to do but relies on his personal ability to persuade Navarre that he ought to remain in Indochina on an indefinite basis. One formula might be to have him become the head of MAAG/Saigon. (Incidentally, I am extremely sorry that Trap is leaving. I think he has done a remarkable job under most difficult circumstances. His replacement, General Dabney, is very highly spoken of. I have met him once; he makes an excellent impression. He does not of course speak French.)

In addition to the action on General O'Daniel the NSC, early this month, requested Defense and CIA to come up with a paper on things which might be done to promote the success of the Laniel-Navarre concept short of any engagement of US combat troops in the area. You will note that State was not asked to participate in this job although we did do a little informal work on it. Concurrently, the French emergency requests with which you are familiar came in (the additional B-26s and the maintenance personnel).

I am sending you herewith for your strictly personal information a copy of the paper submitted to the NSC by the Secretary of Defense, a copy of an analytical memorandum which I wrote on the subject and a copy of a one-page memorandum which Mr. Robertson sent to the Secretary in anticipation of NSC consideration of the paper.[3] At the risk of unnecessary repetition, I wish to stress that these are purely for information and should not be referred to in any official correspondence since they are being extremely closely held here.

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[2] Reference is to NSC 5405, Jan. 16; for extracts, see p. 971.

You will note that so far as the furnishing of additional B–26s and the finding of necessary funds to expand our end-item program for Indochina are concerned there is general agreement. We have not, however, come up with a practical answer as yet on the question of personnel. I think the French should be asked again to supply this personnel even if it means a reduction of their NATO commitments. This, however, may or may not be possible. It should in my judgment be actively explored through Generals Gruenther and Norstad. I hope this course will be adopted. Simultaneously, I think we should make preparation for sending US Air Force ground personnel, perhaps in civilian clothes, to Indochina on a temporary duty basis in order to make sure that the French air lift does not break down. They should, however, only be assigned in the event we conclude that the French cannot supply the necessary personnel after exhausting every possible resource. If we do send our own personnel, we should see that conditions under which they work are as secure as possible and involve a minimum of risk of their involvement in combat, guerrilla or sabotage by the enemy.

You will note that the Defense–CIA paper covers a wide variety of other possible projects. Great emphasis is placed by CIA and also by Defense on the intensification of unconventional warfare activities. . . .

Similarly, questions on psychological warfare and intensified propaganda come back into the picture. We are taking a generally affirmative attitude here.

With regard to the "declarations" which it is proposed the French and US Governments issue, we are for reasons stated in my memoranda taking a negative stand and I do not think we will hear much more about this.

Then, too, we have the rather vague statement that there should be a general review of the national strategy with reference to the entire area. This means in part to try to develop a regional appreciation of the threat of Communist imperalism. It is a line of thought influenced to a large extent by Ambassador Donovan's ideas. . . .

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[3] The enclosures do not accompany the source text. In a typewritten notation, they are identified as the memorandum from Robertson to the Secretary of State, Jan. 20 (p. 985); a memorandum from Bonsal to Robertson, Jan. 19, not printed (PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina"); and the memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, Jan. 15 (p. 968).

It reflects in my judgment, far more a general feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration with the dragging out of the war in Indochina than it does a constructive and well-knit concept of what can be done about the free world position in Southeast Asia. It is something which we here will be laboring with during the coming weeks.

Now as I see it, there are distinct advantages in this renewal of high level concern with Indochina. It is partly based upon a pessimism with which I disagree. To the extent, however, that it results in concrete help to the people who are doing the fighting on the military, political and psychological fronts, it is all to the good. If there is a danger, it lies in the temptation which some of our friends here are undoubtedly experiencing: namely, to make the provision to the French of certain items of military hardware which they urgently require contingent upon the adopting by the French of notions, ideas, activities and strategy which we here think should be adopted. I am all for maximum persuasion but I do not think that it is wise or useful for us to attempt to get the French to adopt, for instance, a US program for unconventional warfare activities as a condition precedent to giving them things which they need in order to carry on their planned offensives against the enemy. Such an attempt will build up resentment and will also tend to destroy the self-confidence which is so necessary to the success of the Navarre concept. This sort of bargaining will also accelerate the day when the French will in effect say to us: "Well, if you are so smart you take care of the baby". I am confident that we will be able to counteract this tendency here and that you will help us at your end. I do not mean, of course, that we should not go after the French to do things which we earnestly believe can and should be done by them but I wish to avoid a situation where their reluctance to do these things results in delay in providing things which they and we have agreed are urgently needed.

The latest I have is that we are going ahead on the short range items from the JCS–CIA paper, i.e., that we will do our best on the B–26s and that we will go to work actively on the question of personnel, first exhausting the possibility of securing this personnel from French availabilities even at the expense of a reduction of French NATO commitments. I do not know who will be charged with working this out with the French but I hope that it will be Generals Gruenther and Norstad.

The longer range items are to be considered by a special high level committee which will apparently be chaired by Bedell Smith. I will try to keep you informed. (In fact this letter may well become obsolete by the time it reaches you but it will at least I hope show you that my heart was in the right place.)

I am lunching with Joe Alsop very shortly and will repeat to him your various messages some of which I have already conveyed by telephone. He has become extraordinarily pessimistic about the military situation. He thinks that Dien Bien Phu will turn out to be a hopeless trap because the enemy will be able to cut off the French air lift. I hope and believe he is wrong. I cling to my confidence in the courage and good sense of Navarre, Bodet, Gambiez, Cogny, Castries and company. I wish there were less pessimism here.

You know how anxious I am to be of assistance in any way possible. We here think that all of you are doing a grand job and that goes double for Louise and yourself.

Yours as ever, PHILIP W. BONSAL

751G.5622/1–2354 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT SAIGON, January 23, 1954—4 p. m.

1307. Repeated information Paris niact 401. Re Department telegram 1271;[1] Paris telegram 287, sent Department 2686;[2] and Embassy telegram 1284, sent Paris 391.[3] De Jean told me today that French Government had modified its decision not to employ American civilian pilots from CAT. French High Command Indochina is now authorized contract such pilots to operate 12 C–119s presently on loan to French Air Force in Indochina but they may fly these planes only over regions which are not scenes of actual military operations. In other words, they may not be employed to fly C–119s to Dien Bien Phu at present.

French Command still expects and hopes that Viet Minh will attack Dien Bien Phu but no longer believes that they will attack as soon as January 25 which was date French intelligence had heard had been fixed by Viet Minh.

De Jean insisted on urgency and importance of US agreeing to complete list of planes and temporary loan of 400 American maintenance personnel for present and spring campaigns and expressed hope that loan or gift of 10 B-26s could be made immediately to increase French defense possibilities in Dien Bien Phu.

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[1] In telegram 1271 to Saigon, Jan. 18, not printed, the Department informed the Embassy that according to Civil Air Transport officials in the United States, 12 pilots had completed C–119 training in Japan and were ready to move. An additional 12 pilots would be ready shortly. (751G.00/1–1854)

[2] Telegram 2686 from Paris, Jan. 20, read as follows: "Department's attention is invited to provision in Prime Minister's letter transmitted Embassy telegram 2668 [p. 983], to effect that no United States crews are requested for C–119 aircraft. French are most explicit on this subject and Embassy has impression that they are particularly determined avoid use CAT pilots on premise this one of most delicate problems related to over-all policy avoid any action which might be interpreted by Chinese as excuse increased intervention their part on behalf Viet Minh." (751G.00/1–2054)

[3] For partial text, see footnote 1, p. 990.

De Jean stated that next month or two would be anxious period because of near-equilibrium of forces but that Navarre had not in any way modified his opinion that a year or 15 months from now Franco-Vietnamese forces could inflict decisive military defeat on Viet Minh. Thereafter, Viet Minh menace should be a police clean-up operation. One thing he worried about was increasing opposition and lassitude in France over continuance of Indochina war. He thought this opposition and lassitude would disappear with a substantial French victory but he was not sure that one could be produced in next few months, although he believed thoroughly there would be local successes in center or south. If Viet Minh decided not to attack Dien Bien Phu but to try to push on to Luang Prabang, French Command could have opportunity to attack their rear and communications and, by reason of its augmented air transport, transport troops to Plaine des Jarres and Luang Prabang. He felt certain that Viet Minh would lose, and rather heavily, in such operations but clashes might not be spectacular. He remarked that Franco-Laotian forces had discovered several small caches of gasoline and rice between Samneua and Luang Prabang, which they had destroyed or taken.

HEATH

Editorial Note

From January 25 to February 18, 1954, the Foreign Ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union met at Berlin to consider problems concerning Germany, Austria, European security, and the Far East. As anticipated, the Soviet Union proposed the convening of a five-power conference which would include the People's Republic of China. Certain documentation on the Berlin Conference with particular reference to the proposed five-power conference as a possible forum for negotiations on Indochina appears in this volume. For additional information on the Berlin proceedings, see volume XVI, pages 14 ff. and 414 ff. For full documentation on the Berlin Conference, including material on the background and disposition of the question of a five-power meeting (resulting in the convening of the Geneva Conference on April 26, 1954), see volume VII.

Unpublished material on the Berlin Conference, including background papers on aspects of the problem of Indochina, is in Department of State Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 188-CF 216.

751G.5 MSP/1-2754: Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, January 27, 1954—1 p. m.

2758. Repeated information Saigon 295. Reference: Deptel 2502.[1] Today's Paris edition *New York Herald Tribune* carries Alsops' article "Where Is Dien Bien Phu" which reveals certain details top secret French request additional US aid Indochina. We deplore this additional leak of important military news and Alsops' willingness to publish items of considerable interest to enemy and potentially great harm to allies for sake of scoop.

French Government has placed emphasis on principle that details of American aid for Indochina, particularly as they concern any manpower services, be very closely held. They are gravely concerned that knowledge United States personnel is performing services for French Union forces will provide Chinese with excuse for similar further intervention on behalf of Viet-Minh. Recently question of use American civilian pilots for C-119 transports occasioned two special interministerial (Cabinet) meetings. As Department knows subject has been handled by us on top secret limited distribution throughout. Aside from press inquiries Embassy will shortly be faced with necessity explaining to French officials how Alsops were informed of top secret project even before US Government has replied to their request. We would be grateful for any explanations and guidance in answering inquiries.[2]

ACHILLES

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[1] Dated Jan. 5, p. 940.

[2] Telegram 2651 to Paris, Jan. 27, read as follows: "Your 2758. Alsop article also appeared syndicated column US press January 27. Naturally cause greatest concern. Source leak unknown.

"Reply press inquiries Department stating no comment." (751G.5 MSP/1-2754)

Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 205

Memorandum for the Record by the Counselor (MacArthur)

SECRET BERLIN, January 27, 1954.

At luncheon on January 26th there was discussion among Secretary Dulles, Mr. Eden, and Mr. Bidault of the Soviet proposal for a five-power conference. M. Bidault said that despite serious problems with French public opinion he would stand absolutely firm in opposition to a five-power conference as proposed by the Soviets. He said, however, that if the Soviets subsequently came up with alternatives, particularly an alternative of calling such a conference for the sake of considering questions concerning Southeast Asia, the French would in all probability be obliged to accept.

Secretary Dulles said he understood that if the Soviets proposed a conference dealing with Indochina, the French might feel they had to accept. If, after weighing all aspects of such a possibility, the French decided such a conference was in their own best interest, the United States could not prevent them from accepting it. However, the Secretary said he did not see how a conference dealing with Indochina could be a five-power conference since he assumed that the Associated States would also participate.

M. Bidault said that if the Associated States participated in such a conference, the Vietminh would have to participate, and this would inflate the prestige of the Vietminh and give it the status of a government which was accepted at least as a *de facto* government. Therefore, M. Bidault had been toying with the idea of trying to get a proxy of some sort from the Associated States to represent them at the conference so that Ho Chi Minh would have no pretext for attending. M. Bidault indicated that he was still turning this possibility over in his mind and had made no decisions with respect to it.

The conversation then turned to the tactics to be followed by the three Western Powers in the meeting with Molotov about an hour later.

Following the close of the quadripartite meeting this afternoon Secretary Dulles requested Mr. MacArthur to get word to the French that if they accepted a five-power conference on Southeast Asia and Indochina, they should bear in mind that the question of whether the United States could participate in such a conference was extremely dubious to say the least; furthermore, that if a conference on Indochina were held without the participation of the Associated States where France purported to speak for them, this would obviously be interpreted as indicating that the Associated States were not free and independent and that the French Declaration of July 3 was without real meaning. Finally, Mr. MacArthur should make clear to the French that if they got involved in negotiations and talks relating to a five-power conference, there might be an extremely adverse effect on the morale and will of the three Associated States and their peoples, who might somehow think France was in the process of negotiating their turn-over to Ho Chi Minh. Any such development which lead [*led?*] to a deterioration of the military situation would be a cause for grave concern to the United States, which was pouring hundreds of millions of dollars of treasure and resources into the Indochinese war.

On the morning of January 27 Mr. MacArthur conveyed the foregoing to M. Roland de Margerie. M. de Margerie said he would pass the comments to M. Bidault at once. However, he could give the most firm and categoric assurances that M. Bidault did not have in mind sidetracking or by-passing the Associated States. He said M. Bidault was convinced the Associated States must participate in any negotiations relating to the future of Indochina. The question is whether they would prefer to participate directly, and thus enable Ho Chi Minh to appear at the conference table and have *de facto* recognition, or whether they would prefer to have France negotiating in their behalf, which would enable the exclusion of Ho from the conference table. Furthermore, M. de Margerie said M. Bidault had reached no firm decisions; that no negotiations of any kind had been decided upon; and that M. Bidault's thinking is still hypothetical.

M. de Margerie then said Bidault was under violent attack in the French Parliament because of the developments in North Africa. Bidault's Indochina policy, which involves remaining in Indochina and endeavoring to gain a position of greater strength from which future negotiations might be possible, was being strongly criticized. French parliamentarians were saying that if France had gotten out of Indochina last summer or autumn and had concentrated tneir strength in North Africa, Spain would not have dared to create the recent difficulties with respect to Morocco. De Margerie said these arguments made no sense at all, but nonetheless French North Africa was a highly emotional subject with the French and in their dismay at the recent developments instigated by Spain they were looking everywhere for someone to pin the blame on. In this case, they were trying to fix the blame on Bidault.

751G.00/1–2954

Memorandum by W. Park Armstrong, Jr., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Intelligence, to the Acting Secretary of State

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] January 29, 1954.

Subject: Recent Disquieting Intelligence on Operations in Indochina

1. *Dien Bien Phu.* A CINCFE "instruction team," after visiting Tonkin, and particularly Dien Bien Phu, reported 28 January (Tab A):[1]

a. French making little effort to maintain contact with Viet Minh forces.

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[1] Tab A, telegram OARMA MC 32–54 from Saigon, Jan. 28, is not printed.

b. In event major Viet Minh attack, French 105 and 155 ammo would last only 4–6 days. USARMA Saigon comments this is probably true although contrasts with previous French G–4 report that 30 days supply was on hand.

c. Unless Viet Minh camouflage technique better than ChiCom in Korea, indications of 3 Divisions Viet Minh force around Dien Bien Phu not apparent.

(It is believed possible that terrain Dien Bien Phu better adapted camouflage than Korea but also possible French intelligence overestimates VM forces.)

2. *Central Laos*. Despite French recovery of Thakhek and numerical superiority around Seno, Viet Minh retains initiative on principal E–W highway and may have capability to cut the main N–S route of French supply between Pakse-Seno (Tab B).[3]

3. *South Annam*. French landing operation (25 battalions) at Tuy Hoa, January 20, to clear coastal region, has apparently not yet made contact with Viet Minh. Reports indicate Viet Minh had prior knowledge French operation.

4. *Tonkin Delta*.

a. USARMA Saigon reports that Viet Minh has intensified road mining, employing new non-metallic mine difficult to detect with standard equipment.

b. According to Governor Tri of Tonkin, Vietnamese National Army Regular Battalion No. 6 was cut to pieces January 23 in Viet Minh ambush losing 50 killed, over 200 missing, and virtually all armament. (200 missing figure and loss of arms indicates continuing poor state military training and political indoctrination.)

c. French mobile striking force in Delta is now reduced from 40 (before Central Laos and Dien Bien Phu) to 15 battalions. (This would appear to virtually eliminate French capabilities for offensive operations in the Delta.)

5. *French Casualty Allowance*. Unofficial reports continue to be received that French forces are limited in operations by a prescribed allowance for casualties, based on replacement capabilities. Most recently, this allowance was quoted as 3% of force committed.

6. *Enemy Capabilities*. Watch Committee, 28 January, reports Viet Minh may develop capability *both* to reduce Dien Bien Phu *and* to push into Northern Laos. The G–2 Sitrep of January 22 reported that the high rate of Viet Minh logistical buildup in Dien Bien Phu area, if continued for 1 month, would permit 60 days combat supplies for 3 Viet Minh Divisions.

W. PARK ARMSTRONG, JR.

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[3] Tab B, consisting of a map, is not reproduced.

S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351, NSC 5405 Series

Memorandum of the Meeting of the President's Special Committee on Indochina, Washington, January 29, 1954[1]

TOP SECRET

1. The Special Committee met in Mr. Kyes' office at 3:30 p. m. 29 January 1954.

2. The first matter discussed was the disposition of urgent French requests for additional U.S. assistance. The Under Secretary of State, General W. B. Smith, mentioned that there has as yet been no reply to Prime Minister Laniel's letter to President Eisenhower[2] on this subject. It was necessary to answer this substantially as soon as possible.

3. Admiral Radford said he had been in touch with General Ely, French Chief of Staff, through General Valluy. Ten B–26 aircraft are on the way to Indochina this week. These would contribute to filling the French request for aircraft to bring two B–26 squadrons up to a strength of 25 operational aircraft each. However, an additional 12 are needed to fill the full requirement because a total of 22 are needed (12 to fill the annual attrition plus 10 to fill the additional French request). There was some discussion on the seeming differences in requests reaching Washington via Paris and those coming through the MAAG. Subsequently in the meeting it was agreed that the French should be informed that the U.S. would act only on requests which had been approved by General O'Daniel after General O'Daniel was set up in Indochina.

4. Admiral Radford indicated that to fill the entire requirement for 22 B–26's on an urgent basis would mean taking some of them from U.S. operational squadrons in the Far East, but this could be done. The aircraft would not all have "zero" maintenance time on them.

5. As to the additional French request for 25 B–26's to equip a third squadron, it was decided that final decision to furnish them should await the return of General O'Daniel. However, the Air Force has been alerted that they may have to be furnished on short notice.

6. As to the provision of a small "dirigible", it was decided to inform the French that this could not be furnished.

7. Regarding the French request for 400 mechanics trained in the maintenance of B–26 and C–47 aircraft, there was considerable dis-

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[1] This memorandum for the record was prepared by Brig. Gen. Charles H. Bonesteel III, on Jan. 30. Bonesteel was Assistant for National Security Council Affairs in the office of Frank C. Nash, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Regarding the establishment of the Special Committee, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 181st Meeting of the NSC, Jan. 21, p. 986.

[2] Reference is to the letter from Premier Laniel to Ambassador Dillon, dated Jan. 18 and transmitted to Washington in telegram 2668 from Paris, Jan. 19, p. 983.

cussion. Admiral Radford said he had informed General Ely, through General Valluy, that the U.S. does not believe the French have exhausted all efforts to get French civilian maintenance crews. He suggested the French try to find them through "Air France." Mr. Kyes mentioned the possibility of obtaining French personnel from their eight aircraft factories or from the big Chateauroux maintenance base where the U.S. employed French mechanics. General Smith inquired about the possibility of lowering French NATO commitments to enable transfer of French military mechanics. Admiral Radford said General Valluy had informed him the French Staff have carefully considered the idea but the French Air Force does not have enough military mechanics trained in B-26 or C-47 maintenance to fill the requirement. Therefore, there would be such a delay while their military mechanics were being trained on these aircraft that the urgent requirement could not be met. He had also said that the employment of French civilian mechanics presented a difficult problem in security clearance.

8. General Smith recommended that the U.S. send 200 U.S. Air Force mechanics to MAAG, Indochina, and tell the French to provide the rest. Admiral Radford said this could be done and that the Air Force is, somewhat reluctantly, making plans to this end. We had let the French know that if American mechanics were sent they must be used only on air bases which were entirely secure from capture. General Smith wondered, in light of additional French requests, if the Committee should not consider sending the full 400 mechanics.

9. Mr. Kyes questioned if sending 200 military mechanics would not so commit the U.S. to support the French that we must be prepared eventually for complete intervention, including use of U.S. combat forces. General Smith said he did not think this would result—we were sending maintenance forces not ground forces. He felt, however, that the importance of winning in Indochina was so great that if worst came to the worst he personally would favor intervention with U.S. air and naval forces—not ground forces. Admiral Radford agreed. Mr. Kyes felt this consideration was so important that it should be put to the highest level. The President himself should decide. General Smith agreed. Mr. Allen Dulles wondered if our preoccupation with helping to win the battle at Dien Bien Phu was so great that we were not going to bargain with the French as we supplied their most urgent needs. Mr. Kyes said this was an aspect of the question he was raising. Admiral Radford read from a cable just received from General O'Daniel[3] which indicated General Navarre

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[3] Telegram ALUSNA Saigon to CINCPAC, date time group 280815Z January 1954 (readdressed as CINCPAC 281222Z January 1954 to CNO), not printed. (JCS files, .092 Asia (6-25-48), sec. 54)

had been most cordial to General O'Daniel at their meeting and had indicated he was pleased with the concept of U.S. liaison officers being assigned to his general headquarters and to the training command. General Navarre and General O'Daniel agreed to try to work out a maximum of collaboration at the military level.

10. Later in the meeting, Mr. Allen Dulles raised the question as to sending the CAP [*CAT?*] pilots the French had once requested. It was agreed that the French apparently wanted them now, that they should be sent, and CIA should arrange for the necessary negotiations with the French in Indochina to take care of it.

11. Mr. Kyes said that if we meet the French urgent demands they should be tied to two things: first, the achievement of maximum collaboration with the French in training and strategy, and secondly, the strengthening of General O'Daniel's hand in every way possible. General Smith agreed and felt we should reinforce General O'Daniel's position not only with the French in Indochina but also at the highest level in Paris.

12. *Summary of Action Agreed Regarding Urgent French Requests*

It was agreed:

a. To provide a total of 22 B–26 aircraft as rapidly as practicable.

b. To provide 200 uniformed U.S. Air Force mechanics who would be assigned as an augmentation to MAAG, Indochina. These mechanics to be provided only on the understanding that they would be used at bases where they would be secure from capture and would not be exposed to combat.

c. To send the CAP [*CAT?*] pilots, with CIA arranging necessary negotiations.

d. Not to provide a "dirigible."

e. To await General O'Daniel's return to Washington before making a decision on the other French requests. Efforts should continue to get the French to contribute a maximum number of mechanics.

It was further agreed that General Smith would clear these recommended actions with the President.[4]

13. The next item discussed was the status of General O'Daniel. Mr. Kyes said General Trapnell, the present Chief of MAAG, is being replaced at the normal expiration of his tour. General Dabney[5] had been chosen to replace General Trapnell and is about to leave for Indochina. Admiral Radford pointed out that General O'Daniel could be made Chief of MAAG without any further clearance with the French Government. General Smith said this would be all right but should not preclude further action to increase the position of General O'Daniel. General Erskine pointed out that the MAAG in Indochina

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[4] With regard to the decisions taken by the President, see memorandum by Deputy Secretary of Defense Kyes to Secretary of the Air Force Talbott, *infra*.

[5] Maj. Gen. John A. Dabney, USA.

is not a "military mission" but only an administrative group concerned with the provision of MDAP equipment. He thought the MAAG status should be raised to that of a mission which could help in training. It was agreed that General O'Daniel should probably be first assigned as Chief of MAAG and that, for this reason, General Dabney's departure for Indochina should be temporarily held up. General Dabney should, however, go to Indochina to assist General O'Daniel by heading up the present MAAG functions. Admiral Davis[6] was requested to assure that General Dabney did not depart until further instructions were given.

14. There was some discussion, initiated by Mr. Kyes, about ways by which the French Foreign Legion in Indochina might be augmented. He felt that if the German and French Governments would facilitate it, considerable numbers of Germans might be enlisted to increase the Legion. Mr. Kyes mentioned several other general courses of action he thought should be further considered by the Special Committee and then suggested that General Erskine read his paper on the subject of Indochina.[7] Mr. Kyes made it plain he considered this paper only a point of departure for further work by the Special Committee. General Erskine then read the paper, copies of which were given to the members of the Special Committee.

15. Admiral Radford said he thought, in general, that the paper covered many important fields but he had one or two reservations. He felt, with regard to the recommendation on regional coordination, that CINCPAC was, and should be, the man to head up regional coordination of the MAAGs. Mr. Kyes reiterated that the paper was only a point of departure and said he felt the basic trouble in trying to help in Indochina was the attitude of the French Government. Mr. Allen Dulles said the French do not want us to become too involved in the conduct of operations in Indochina because they want to keep one foot on the negotiations stool.

16. Admiral Radford said he felt the paper was too restrictive in that it was premised on U.S. action short of the contribution of U.S. combat forces. He said that the U.S. could not afford to let the Viet Minh take the Tonkin Delta. If this were lost, Indochina would be lost and the rest of Southeast Asia would fall. The psychological impact of such a loss would be unacceptable to the U.S. Indochina must have the highest possible priority in U.S. attention. He suggested the

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[6] Vice Adm. Arthur C. Davis, USN, Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense.

[7] The subject paper has not been identified in Department of State files; for the report of Mar. 2 by the Special Committee with regard to measures to be taken to secure military victory in Indochina, see p. 1109.

paper, when redrafted, should have two parts, one based on no intervention with combat forces and a second part indicating what should be done to prepare against the contingency where U.S. combat forces would be needed. General Smith was generally agreeable to this approach.

17. It was agreed not to use the OCB facilities to support the Special Committee, but instead to set up a working group of representatives of the principals of the Special Committee to revise General Erskine's paper by the middle of the week, 31 January–6 February.

18. The working group would comprise:

Admiral Davis (OSD)
Mr. Godel (OSD)[8]
Captain Anderson (JCS)[9]
Mr. Bonsal (State)
Mr. Aurell (CIA)[10]
General Bonesteel (OSD)

General Smith recommended that a representative of the Air Force be included in the working group.

19. At the close of the meeting, General Smith inquired as to what was being done to speed up the delivery of spare parts for B–26's and C–119's. He was informed that necessary action had been taken.

20. Mr. Allen Dulles inquired if an unconventional warfare officer, specifically Colonel Lansdale,[11] could not be added to the group of five liaison officers to which General Navarre had agreed. Admiral Radford thought this might be done and at any rate Colonel Lansdale could immediately be attached to the MAAG, but he wondered if it would not be best for Colonel Lansdale to await General O'Daniel's return before going to Indochina. In this way, Colonel Lansdale could help the working group in its revision of General Erskine's paper. This was agreeable to Mr. Allen Dulles.

21. Present at the meeting were:

Department of Defense—Mr. Kyes, Admiral Radford, Admiral Davis, General Erskine, Mr. Godel, B/G Bonesteel, Colonel Alden.

Department of State—General Smith, Mr. Robertson.

CIA—Mr. Allen Dulles, General Cabell, Mr. Aurell, Colonel Lansdale.

C. H. BONESTEEL, III
Brigadier General, USA

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[8] William H. Godel, Deputy Director of the Office of Special Operations, Department of Defense.

[9] Capt. George W. Anderson, Jr., USN.

[10] George E. Aurell.

[11] Col. Edward G. Lansdale, USAF.

751G.00/1-2954

Memorandum by the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Kyes) to the Secretary of the Air Force (Talbott) [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 29 January 1954.

1. Pursuant to a recommendation of the President's Special Committee on Indo-China,[2] the President on this date made the following decisions, in order to meet urgent French requests for assistance to cope with the military problem posed by the Communist operations:

a. To transfer immediately to Indo-China 10 additional B-26 type aircraft to bring two French B-26 squadrons up to a strength of 25 planes each. This brings to a total of 22 the airplanes of this type to be delivered to Indo-China in the immediate future. It will be decided later as to how these 10 aircraft will be programmed for accounting purposes.

b. To augment *temporarily* the U.S. MAAG in Indo-China by 200 U.S. Air Force mechanics to assist the French Air Force in the training of French personnel in the maintenance of C-47 and B-26 aircraft. These personnel are to be furnished on the understanding that they will be used only on bases where they are secure from capture and will not be exposed to combat. It is expected that these personnel may have to remain in Indo-China as late as 15 June 1954 while French Air Force mechanics are being provided and trained in adequate quantity to maintain this equipment.

c. Action on the other urgent French requests, including provision of 25 additional B-26 aircraft and the balance of the 400 mechanics, will be deferred pending the return of Lt. General O'Daniel to Washington and the result of continuing efforts to provide the additional 200 mechanics from sources other than the USAF.

2. It is requested that the Secretary of the Air Force take appropriate action to implement, as soon as possible, the decisions set forth in paragraphs 1 *a* and *b* above. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will inform General Valluy, of the French Military Mission to the United States, of this decision.[3]

ROGER M. KYES

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[1] Copies of this memorandum were transmitted to the Under Secretary of State, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[2] See memorandum of the meeting of the Special Committee on Jan. 29, *supra*.

[3] General Valluy was informed by memorandum of Jan. 30; for text, see *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Book 9, p. 245.

Editorial Note

On January 29, 1954, Senator John C. Stennis of Mississippi, member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, transmitted a letter to Charles E. Wilson, Secretary of Defense, expressing opposition to participation by the United States in the war in Indochina. For text, see *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Book 9, page 239.

751G.00/1–3154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET   SAIGON, January 31, 1954—6 p. m.

1360. Repeated information Paris 415, Hanoi unnumbered. DeJean asked me to see him yesterday to bring me up to date on military situation. At Dien Bien Phu French had intelligence, not yet entirely confirmed, that one Viet Minh division had been withdrawn from besieging forces and was on its way south toward Luang Prabang. It seemed evident that Giap had decided against attacking Dien Bien Phu. It was great disappointment to French Command who had counted on inflicting really heavy losses there on Viet Minh. Instead Giap apparently planned to make spectacular advance against Luang Prabang. It was politically necessary for French to defend Luang Prabang, DeJean said, although it meant further dispersal of French forces and foregoing attacks on now largely undefended provinces of Thanh Hoa and Vinh, which were crucially important to Viet Minh. I remarked I could understand political importance but it seemed military nonsense to disperse forces for defense of Luang Prabang when more damage could be done to Viet Minh elsewhere, but DeJean replied that Navarre was in full agreement as to political necessity of defending royal and religious capital of Laos. Giap intended apparently to leave two divisions to "mask" Dien Bien Phu. DeJean said French Command was convinced that was not enough to hold down garrison, which could break out and inflict damage on enemy.

Meanwhile, in Central Laos Viet Minh had seven battalions north of Savannakhet and three battalions apparently moving south with missions to cut river and highway line of communications to Vientiane. French had forces to handle that threat. Apparently as a countermove to current Franco-Vietnamese operations in coastal area of Central Vietnam, Viet Minh had moved about a regiment and half against Kontum, but French Command in high plateau had moved groupes mobiles to Kontum and were confident they would hold there.

Cogny, he said, was bemoaning lack of two additional divisions which would enable him to invade Thanh Hoa and Vinh, which would force Viet Minh to call off any attack on Luang Prabang and recall divisions surrounding Dien Bien Phu. Two divisions could not be made available within Indochina and there was no chance of getting them from France. With movement of three Viet Minh divisions to Dien Bien Phu the delta was in no danger. Cogny had enough force to block any sizeable Viet Minh operations there.

Navarre, DeJean said, was still entirely confident that he could not only meet all Viet Minh movements in Laos and high plateau but that his time-table for eventual victory would not be altered. With present near-equilibrium of forces it was never contemplated that decisive blows could begin to be made against Viet Minh until next fall when build-up of new Vietnamese battalions would provide high command with necessary superiority in manpower.

DeJean inquired if we had any news on French request for B–26's, additional matériel, military mechanics and civilian pilots. It was obvious, he said, that French could meet these dispersed operations of Viet Minh only through their air power, both bombers and transport planes. Whatever delay there might be in furnishing an extra squadron of B–26's, he hoped there would be no delay in furnishing 10 B–26's which had been requested with special urgency.

He said he could not believe that if French had had massive air force of say 500 planes they could not have broken up Viet Minh movement to Dien Bien Phu and other places. He quite realized that it was impossible to furnish such a number of planes and ground crews or for French to find pilots for them.

HEATH

751G.00/2–154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 1, 1954—7 p. m.
[Received 10:45 a. m.]

1363. Repeated information Paris 417, HICOG Berlin 2. Berlin for MacArthur. ReDeptel 1351 January 29.[1] Terms of purported Communist armistice offer for Indochina are preposterously unacceptable. They would mean turning over to Communists almost all of Laos, a country which Viet Minh have been able to invade briefly on occasion but in which they have been unable to establish themselves with any permanency except in few regions of mountainous North Laos. They would mean turning over capital city of Hue, which for some six years has been in Vietnamese hands, turning over Hanoi and mineral, industrial and food resources and 7,000,000 inhabitants of Tonkin Delta, in which Viet Minh have been able to continue infiltration but which they have been unable to capture after seven years of war. They would bring Communists up to Mekong ready for subversive efforts in Thailand. With the millions of Tonkin Delta dwellers whom they could force into their armies or service they would mean the speedy loss of rest of Vietnam, Cambodia, and eventually all of Southeast Asia. Sixteenth is not a parallel that is a defendable military frontier.

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[1] Telegram 1351 to Saigon (also sent to Paris, New Delhi, and Berlin), Jan. 29, indicated that according to an intelligence source, the Soviet Union had ordered its Ambassador in France to test the French reaction to a possible settlement in Indochina based on the following provisions: there would be a provisional armistice line drawn at the 16th parallel under the supervision of Indian troops; the French would evacuate Hanoi and the Tonkin Delta; the Viet Minh would cease all activities in the Saigon region and in Cambodia; finally, a political conference would be held in New Delhi within 3 months to settle all remaining difficulties. (751G.00/1–2954)

Department is aware of course that it is utterly impossible to draw an armistice line in this war which either in guerrilla or in large scale form reaches every major portion of Vietnam.

HEATH

751G.52/2–154 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, February 1, 1954—6 p. m.
[Received February 2—4:08 a. m.]

425. Repeated information Saigon 309, Paris 180. Paris limit distribution. Attempted and completed acts of sabotage and terrorism appear to be increasing in Red River delta, as if to offset Viet Minh failure to attack and overwhelm Dien-Bien-Phu.

Director of railway connecting Haiphong and Hanoi advises that yesterday morning about 0900 as troop train en route from port to capital passed post at Pham-Xa, 72 kilometers east of Hanoi, it was blown up by electrically detonated device containing estimated 50 kilograms of explosive and buried at edge of ballast. Three cars carrying 50 French Union troops each were hit; about 15 men were killed and 25 wounded. One of the Viet Minh responsible for detonation was caught and killed. Average of one train monthly has been blown up since last April.

Last night five air force DC–3s were sabotaged at Doson field near Haiphong. General Cogny said at the time his reserve parachute battalions were taken from Tonkin and sent to middle Mekong that he was especially concerned by resultant weakening of his air base security, since these troops had been stationed near, and had helped to guard, principal fields.

At about time State Secretary Jacquet arrived 25th, plastic explosive charges with clock mechanisms were discovered in two Hanoi officers messes: one belonging to Air Transport Command and the other to Headquarters Engineers.

Chief political officer of Delegation General said today it should be anticipated that Viet Minh will undertake still wider program of terrorism, directed particularly against Occidentals, and will intensify efforts to sabotage such critical installations as air bases, at same time stepping up pace of more conventional military activities throughout delta.

STURM

751G.5/2–254 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Berlin[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, February 2, 1954—6:58 p. m.

Tosec 67. Secto 57.[2] Indochina summary: Viet Minh main effort continues against Northwest Tonkin with deployment there of all or majority three divisions against French position at Dien Bien Phu and Northern Laos. Communist strength between thirty and forty thousand in general area opposing friendly garrison of fifteen thousand. Post completely dependent on air supply from Hanoi 200 miles away. Enemy reported have artillery and anti-aircraft on high ground surrounding Dien Bien Phu with capability seriously restrict air supply although hard intelligence scanty this subject. Enemy can attack post in force, in which case French continue believe can hold and inflict heavy losses on enemy. Enemy can also contain Dien Bien Phu with portion his forces and attack Luang Prabang, capital of Laos. On January 30 Viet Minh column of eighteen battalions was confirmed as moving southwest from Dien Bien Phu area. Press reports column had reached point within sixty miles Luang Prabang February 3 and was still moving south. French have stated Luang Prabang will be defended. Reserves from Delta may be flown in. Strain would be increased on air transport requirements. French command believes reduction enemy forces around Dien Bien Phu will permit garrison there to break out offensively.

In Central Viet Nam successful Franco-Vietnamese operation along coastline has reoccupied area under Viet Minh control for seven years. No significant Viet Minh opposition although enemy attack in plateau area to north of area of operation may be diversionary. French command publicizes this as largest French offensive operation undertaken so far in war, in order to counter-balance overall defensive posture at time when victories of greatest psychological importance vis-à-vis French opinion.

Stepped up Viet Minh activity Central and South Viet Nam and Central Laos during past ten days included attacks against small outposts some of which taken or abandoned.

Six additional B–26 planes delivered last week against FY54 allotment. American civilian pilots being made available for twelve C–119s now on loan.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal and Hoey of PSA. Secretary of State Dulles was in Berlin to participate in the Four-Power Foreign Ministers Meeting held from Jan. 25 to Feb. 18. For information on the Berlin Conference, see editorial note, p. 997.

[2] In telegram Secto 57 from Berlin, Jan. 31, not printed, the U.S. Delegation requested current background information on a number of subjects, including Indochina. (396.1 BE/1–3154)

Regarding recent urgent French requests, Defense taking steps provide additional B–26s and, in consultation with French, help meet maintenance personnel requirements. This being handled through military channel only.

High Command maintains confidence ability meet enemy offensive operations this season and initiate next season (October 1954) decisive blows against enemy on basis necessary superiority of manpower which would by then be provided as result build-up new Vietnamese forces.

Jacquet and French Army Chief Staff Blanc currently in Indochina and Pleven expected shortly with Ely.

Department impressed with probability enemy making desperate effort secure at least appearance success during Berlin meeting. Realistic approach our part to situation most necessary but unjustified pessimism plays into enemy hands.

There have been no new developments reported with respect to Viet Minh peace overtures.

SMITH

751J.5/2–254

Memorandum of Conversation, by Noel Hemmendinger of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 2, 1954.

Subject: ROK Offer of Division for Laos

Participants: Ambassador You Chan Yang, Korean Embassy
Philip Han, Counselor, Korean Embassy
Walter S. Robertson, Assistant Secretary, FE
Noel Hemmendinger, NA

Ambassador Yang said that the Korean Government realized that it had to be prepared to defend its own soil but also feels keenly that the fight against Communism in Indochina is the fight of all anti-Communist countries and is willing, if the United States does not object, to send a division to help in the defense of Laos.

Mr. Robertson said that this is primarily a military question but that, speaking personally, he did not see how a division could be spared from Korea without impairing the defenses there. He reminded the Ambassador that there had been a protest from Foreign Minister Pyun at the proposed withdrawal of two United States divisions, although President Rhee had been assured that these two divisions would be withdrawn only when two ROK divisions were ready to take their place. The Korean offer, on which we already had information from the United Nations Command,[1] would be discussed with the Department of Defense. Whatever the outcome, the United States appreciated the commendable spirit which had prompted the Korean offer.

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[1] In telegram C 66980 from Tokyo, Feb. 2, Gen. John E. Hull, Commander in Chief, Far East Command, transmitted letters from President Syngman Rhee and Premier Paik Too Chin containing the Korean offer of one division for Laos. The telegram was directed to the Department of the Army, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Army Chief of Staff (General Ridgway). (751G.5/2-254)

751G.00/2-454 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, February 4, 1954—5 p. m.

2852. Repeated information Berlin 202. Berlin for USDel. Maurice Schumann, like Laniel, expresses concern over effect here should Russians make some offer giving rise hopes that Indochina war would be terminated should France reject EDC. He adds that if such an offer were made, nature of official American reaction would be of great importance here, and expresses particular hope that such reaction would not be of nature as to give impression that US was blocking an Indochina settlement.

ACHILLES

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 183d Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, February 4, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

The following were present at the 183rd Meeting of the Council: The President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Acting Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Secretary of Commerce (for Item 2); the Acting Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Item 2); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (for Items 3 and 4); the Director of Central Intelligence; The Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; Mr. Max Lehrer, Department of Defense (for Item 3); the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Feb. 5.

Following is a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

1. *Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security*

The Director of Central Intelligence reported that the most important developments in Indochina had occurred in the Dien Bien Phu area, from which approximately fourteen Vietminh battalions had moved in the direction of Luang Prabang, the capital of Laos. This force was now about 60 miles north of the capital and still moving ahead, although Mr. Dulles believed that the French ought to be able to contain the thrust before it reached its objective. The balance of the Vietminh forces were still investing Dien Bien Phu. Mr. Dulles thought that the thrust into Laos, as well as the Vietminh activities in southern Annam, were primarily psychological in motivation and designed to fit in with the Soviet propaganda line at the Berlin conference. The objective was to induce the French to give up the struggle in Indochina.

The most disheartening feature of the news from Indochina, said Mr. Dulles, was the evidence that the majority of people in Vietnam supported the Vietminh rebels. This had enabled them to seize 40 French outposts in the course of the last ten days. There was no dynamism in the leadership of the Franco-Vietnamese forces. What was really needed was a leader with some of the characteristics of a Rhee. Most of the people of Vietnam obviously considered that this was a French colonial war, and it was difficult to see how this problem could be solved short of a drastic change in French psychology.

At this point the President interrupted Mr. Dulles' briefing to inquire whether it would be possible to capitalize on the religious issue in an effort to provide inspiration to the French Union cause. Since he understood that most of the people of Vietnam were Buddhists, the President asked whether it was possible to find a good Buddhist leader to whip up some real fervor. The President illustrated his idea by referring to the incursion of the Arabs into North Africa and Southern Europe in the early Middle Ages. It was pointed out to the President that, unhappily, Buddha was a pacifist rather than a fighter (laughter).

The President went on to say that he had recently received the Ambassador from Vietnam,[2] and that he had asked the Ambassador whether he believed the French promises of genuine independence for Vietnam. When the Ambassador replied in the affirmative, the President inquired how many of the people of Vietnam believed the French promises. The Ambassador shrugged his shoulders and said perhaps two or three percent.

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[2] No additional record of the conversation has been found in Department of State files.

The Vice President expressed some doubt as to the strength and conviction with which the people of Vietnam clung to their religious views. As for Bao Dai, unsatisfactory as he seemed to be in many ways, it would be be difficult indeed to find an acceptable substitute. The Vice President therefore thought it better to try to make Bao Dai himself a more effective leader. After his conversations with Bao Dai, the Vice President had concluded that he was intelligent, good looking, and well intentioned. If he could actually be induced to go out among the troops, the French believed that he might accomplish a lot by way of instilling a fighting spirit. Unfortunately, continued the Vice President, Bao Dai shares the typical French caution, and when this idea had been suggested to him Bao Dai had replied that it was too risky to attempt it now, but that he would do what was required at a later time.

The President commented that he still believed that there was something in the idea of a religious motivation, and pointed out how Joan of Arc had managed to defeat a large enemy force and place a timid king upon his throne in France. The President said that his religious leader would not attempt to oust Bao Dai, but to support him.

Mr. Dulles pointed out that there were, of course, a million and a half Roman Catholics in Vietnam, and that they included most of the best brains in the country. Undaunted, the President suggested that the Catholics be enlisted too.

After further discussion of the lack of leadership in Indochina, the Vice President inquired of Mr. Dulles as to the reliability of the French intelligence reports concerning developments in the war. By and large, Mr. Dulles thought that French intelligence on the enemy's military movements was pretty good. If that is the case, replied the Vice President, can anything be done to counteract the greatly exaggerated reports on the Vietminh successes against the French in Indochina? It seemed obvious that the Vietminh propaganda people had magnified their successes out of all reasonable proportion with very serious repercussions in France and elsewhere in the free world. Mr. Dulles replied that of course we could do a great deal to counteract this propaganda if the French could be induced to play ball with us. As a matter of fact, continued Mr. Dulles, the French themselves exaggerate the successes of the enemy for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was to prepare the ground for negotiations. The Vice President admitted that this was a fact, but thought that the French in Paris, rather than in the field, were at fault. Generals Navarre and Cogny, said the Vice President, had indicated that they had no faith whatever in negotiations with the Vietminh. At any rate, said the Vice President, what should really concern us is the constant stream of bad news from the battle areas. This is developing a defeatist attitude in the United States as well as in France. The recent Alsop columns were proof. Furthermore, there was a very defeatist atmosphere on Capitol Hill about the usefulness of any further American aid for Indochina.

At this point Mr. Dulles read a brief summary of the CBS newscast of this morning, which revealed the existence of a special high-level committee to advise the National Security Council as to further steps to assist the French in Indochina. The President exhibited anger at this latest leak of classified information, and inquired who possibly could have told the press about the existence of this committee. Did every member of the Council warn his subordinates to shut up about such matters? There was no answer to the President's question, but Secretary Smith commented that about all one could say was that this secret had been kept quite a bit longer than most others.

The Vice President said that he had one more point to raise before we left the Indochina problem. Has everything, he inquired, been explored with respect to additional measures which might be taken by the USIS and FOA to counter the defeatist complex? Congress, he added, would be much more willing to contemplate additional support for this kind of assistance than it would additional U.S. military measures.

Governor Stassen said he would undertake to see if there were anything else that might be done, but pointed out that of course the French authorities in Indochina did not like the USIS, which made it very hard for that agency to show any initiative. Mr. Dulles agreed with Governor Stassen, . . .

The Vice President said that Governor Stassen and Mr. Dulles had put their fingers on the very basic problem. The United States has some very good representatives in Vietnam, but it ought, particularly in the case of the USIS, to have *the very best men* in the information and propaganda fields. These new men should be found and sent out there in order to reappraise the situation since, after a period of six months or so, our representatives tended to get into a rut. In short, we didn't have our first team in the field for the USIS, and the Vice President believed that Mr. Streibert himself might profitably go out there and look over the situation.

. . . .

Secretary Wilson endorsed the idea of sending our very best team of experts to Indochina. There was no doubt whatsoever, he said, of General O'Daniel's capacity to judge the military situation, but some skepticism existed in the Pentagon as to General O'Daniel's qualifications in the political and psychological field.

Secretary Smith commented that it was a pity that we had not sent General Donovan to Indochina rather than to Thailand. The Vice President added that our present Ambassador in Vietnam, Heath, was very capable and efficient, but that he had been stationed at his post so long that he had inevitably taken on much of the French attitude.

. . . .

751G.00/2-554 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT BERLIN, February 5, 1954—5 p. m.

Dulte 37. Repeated information Paris 137. Bidault has just shown me a telegram from Indochina indicating that the military situation is not good. It is probable that the French will not be able to hold Luang Prabang and that five to six battalions probably cannot be extricated and will be lost.

Laniel is still standing firm and is not shaken by this news but the effect on French public and parliamentary opinion will be most unfortunate.[1]

This news will of course have a definite bearing on French attitude in further consideration of Far Eastern matters by restricted meeting of the four Ministers to examine further Berlin agenda item one.[2]

DULLES

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[1] Telegram 2879 from Paris, Feb. 6, read as follows: "Berlin for USDel. Foreign Office has indicated Embassy that although French Union forces expect to fall back in series delaying actions to immediate perimeter Luang Prabang where principal defense effort to be made, they confident, on basis their most recent information, that Luang Prabang can be held. Foreign Office state they only too well aware political implications fall Luang Prabang might have on French opinion and for that reason wish emphasize every effort made to hold Luang Prabang." (751G.00/2-654)

[2] Agenda item 1 was the question of the convening of a five-power conference to include the People's Republic of China.

751G.00/2-554 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Berlin[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 5, 1954—6: 06 p. m.

Tedul 25. Eyes only for the Secretary. Your Dulte 37[2] re Indochina arrived at same time I received long and most unfavorable estimate from American Military Attachés Saigon. Latter has also been read by Pres who just phoned me.[3] In brief American officers say that after auspicious beginning Navarre's actions reveal beyond question same conservative strategy and tactics as predecessor. They are primarily defensive even in areas where French have overwhelming fire power and strategic transport capabilities. Battalions dispersed throughout Indochina exactly as one year ago and they put their trust in barbed wire. Our people comment further that little progress has been made in important fields of training and psychological warfare and concluded with estimate that Navarre has been directed by Paris to conduct a minimum action in Indochina, improving his position where feasible but with objective of producing negotiations. His opponents are fighting a clever war of attrition without chance of major military victory but we feel that time working in their favor and that French and US public opinion will force eventual unfavorable negotiation.

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[1] Drafted by Acting Secretary Smith.

[2] *Supra.*

[3] The reference telegram of Feb. 3 was relayed to Berlin via military channels on Feb. 4 for the Secretary of State, and arrived on Feb. 6. A copy of the telegram from the Department of the Army to Secretary Dulles at Berlin is in Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 212. The unfavorable report from Saigon was discussed briefly and inconclusively by President Eisenhower and Acting Secretary of State Smith in a telephone conversation of Feb. 5. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file, "Telephone Conversations")

The final consensus of informed US military opinion is that the greatest deterrents to military action are lack of military officers, inadequate training (including poor staffing work) and a defensive psychology. They do not believe that the addition of unlimited supplies of US equipment would correct these deficiencies.

I have consulted with no one on this and send it for your eyes only with the thought that it may be necessary for you to have a frank and friendly talk with Bidault and possibly with Laniel.

We have begun to send technicians which the French requested and in other ways are moving as rapidly as possible to meet their latest emergency requests but I sense from the Pentagon a feeling of grave apprehension lest we may be putting in place costly military equipment which will be lost to us and Western cause.

SMITH

751G.00/1–1954 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 5, 1954—6 : 15 p. m.

2757. Paris 2503 repeated Saigon 256,[2] Paris 2668 repeated Saigon 284.[3] In addition to acknowledgments made by Embassy Paris to Laniel's letters of December 30 and January 18, Chargé Paris at his discretion may wish send letter his signature to Laniel along following lines:

"Dear Mr. President: Needs of French Air Force Indochina which you brought my attention your letters of December 30 and January

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[1] Drafted by Hoey and Day of PSA. Also sent to Saigon as telegram 1397 and to Berlin as Tosec 91.

[2] Dated Jan. 5, p. 942.

[3] Dated Jan. 19, p. 983.

18 have received urgent attention of President of United States and his principal advisers.

"I wish to assure you my Government fully understands vital part which French Air Force is so valiantly and effectively playing in present stage of military operations Indochina and how important it is that it be in no way handicapped in carrying out its essential tasks. Practical questions involved are being, I understand, rapidly explored and settled by pertinent military authorities our two countries."

For your information: Department informed Admiral Radford in close touch General Valluy all aspects.[4]

Information USDel Berlin: Letters referred to from Laniel contain requests additional B–26 planes and American ground maintenance personnel acting in civilian capacity.

SMITH

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[4] In telegram 2899 from Paris, Feb. 9, the Embassy reported that the letter to Laniel had been handed to Maurice Schumann, the French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that morning. (751G.00/2–954) In the meantime, on Feb. 6, the Department of Defense announced in Washington that in response to a French request, the delivery of B–26 aircraft was being accelerated and that some 200 ground personnel were also being sent. The MAAG personnel were described as noncombatants who would act solely as technical advisers and expert mechanics. (Department of Defense Press Release No. 134–54, Feb. 6, 1954; Department of Defense files)

In telegram 1401 from Saigon, Feb. 8, Ambassador Heath reported the following: "Ten additional B–26 urgently requested by French already arrived, plus seven previously programmed B–26. Our understanding that favorable consideration will be given to request for additional squadron of B–26 if and when pilots now being trained in France complete training and are sent to Indochina. 200 USAF mechanics already arrived here and are at work at Tourane and Do Son airfields. This additional maintenance force believed will be sufficient to maintain French air fleet as at present constituted." (751G.5622/2–854)

751G.00/2–554 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, February 5, 1954—7:32 p. m.

1400. For Ambassador. All aspects Indochina situation being given top level consideration here in atmosphere serious concern and desire find ways be helpful. Would appreciate your current views urgently on general situation and specifically with reference following:

(1) Are there any further political measures which French could take to increase local support for war effort. Would declaration granting self-determination as to membership in French Union be helpful locally (effect in France would of course be a factor in reaching decision).

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Repeated to Paris as telegram 2766.

(2) Would it be possible secure more active and dynamic conduct on part Bao Dai and possibly other Vietnamese leaders? Department aware your concern this matter. Department wonders whether perhaps suitable communication from President Eisenhower might be helpful in energizing Bao Dai.[2]

Department assumes you are aware recent military Attaché estimates military situation and prospects.

SMITH

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[2] Telegram 2892 from Paris, Feb. 8, read as follows: "Deptel 2766 (Saigon 1400) February 5. Re specific suggestion paragraph (1) reftel: In Embassy's opinion the risk of further reducing French support for continuation of military effort in IC this critical juncture outweighs any advantages IC that might be derived from issuance of declaration granting self-determination as to membership in French Union. Additionally, insofar as Embassy has been able to determine, solution [*relation?*] Vietnam to French Union should not prove insurmountable problem in course forthcoming Franco-Vietnamese negotiations at Paris." (751G.5/2–854)

For the comments of the Embassy at Saigon on both point 1 and point 2, see telegram 1417 from Saigon, Feb. 10, p. 1030.

396.1 BE/2–654 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the President

TOP SECRET NIACT BERLIN, February 6, 1954—1 p. m.

Dulte 42. For President copy eyes only for Acting Secretary from Secretary. Greatly appreciate your message.[1] We approach critical aspect in relation to Indochina. Yesterday I proposed restricted conference Monday [2] on Far Eastern agenda item. This had been agreed to last week when we left full conference discussion of first agenda item. Had hoped events might make this restricted session unnecessary or at least that specific discussion Indochina could be avoided. But French insistent and British strongly press for some "constructive" move our part in Asian area. Under circumstances felt it was best for me to make the proposal for restricted meeting as indicating less weakness than if others made it. Also if further discussion inevitable, felt desirable initiate it prior to worse news from Indochina. Last night I urged Bidault to pass over any suggestion of Indochina negotiation, saying that even to initiate discussion, put us on slippery ground, and might lead to further deterioration morale in Indochina and France. However, he feels that bottom will fall out of French home situation unless he does something here to indicate a desire to end Indochina war.

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[1] Telegram Tedul 24 to Berlin, Feb. 5, contained the following message from President Eisenhower to Secretary Dulles regarding the progress of deliberations at the Berlin Conference:

"My impression agrees with yours that Western position has been strengthened. Possibly this is partly due to uncompromising approach of Molotov, but it is equally the result of your skillful tactics and of Bidault's heartening display of courage and stamina. He apparently gained great confidence from your example, and I hope that his attitude will be reflected in a like increase in the confidence of the French Parliament and population.

"With greetings to your party and warm regard to you, Eisenhower." (396.1 BE/2–554)

The Berlin proceedings are documented fully in volume VII.

[2] Feb. 8.

I shall do everything possible minimize risks, but dare not push Bidault beyond point which he thinks will break his position in France, as he our main reliance both for EDC and Indochina, although on latter Laniel also seems to be firm for continuing French effort.

DULLES

396.1 BE/2–654 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Berlin [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 6, 1954—5 : 26 p. m.
PRIORITY

Tedul 27. Re Dulte 40.[2] Appreciate French pressures for negotiated Indochina settlement. We wonder whether preliminary private conversations between French and British and/or Russians might not have occurred. If some formula envisaging eventual negotiations is unavoidable, we hope it will conform as closely as possible to language penultimate paragraph Dulte 35.[3] You, of course, will know best whether to recall that French associated themselves at UNGA last August with view that favorable developments at Korean political conference should precede discussion of other Asian questions with states concerned with those questions. If that position is abandoned and we appear to be suing for negotiated peace, Communists may well conclude situation so desperate in Indochina they need only stand firm to win full victory. Negotiations in such circumstances not likely produce agreement but could further sap French will to resist in Indochina.

SMITH

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[1] Drafted by Robert D. Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary of State, and David H. Popper, Deputy Director of the Office of United Nations Political Affairs.

[2] Telegram Dulte 40 from Berlin, Feb. 6, reported on a French draft regarding a five-power conference and Indochina negotiations, which had been circulated that day at a meeting of the Western Foreign Ministers. (396.1 BE/2–654) For documentation on this subject, see volume VII.

[3] Telegram Dulte 35 from Berlin, Feb. 4, contained the text of a U.S. draft on the question of a five-power conference, transmitted to the French and British Delegations that day. (396.1 BE/2–454) For documentation on this subject, see volume VII.

711.551/2–854 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Berlin

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 8, 1954—2:08 p. m.

Tedul 28. Apropos Tedul 25.[1] Heath has reported that Navarre does not agree to O'Daniel's remaining on permanent liaison station but accepts only periodic six week O'Daniel visits and a permanent junior liaison group. Heath foresees future difficulty between Navarre concept of liaison group to transmit aid requests to U.S. military and O'Daniel concept his mission to provide day by day tactical and strategic advice to Navarre and assist Navarre to secure necessary matériel. Heath further notes there was practically no meeting of minds between O'Daniel and Navarre.[2]

SMITH

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[1] Dated Feb. 5, p. 1017.

[2] The report by Ambassador Heath summarized here was contained in telegram 1381 from Saigon, Feb. 5. (711.551/2–854) Heath also expressed reservations regarding the desirability of the stationing of General O'Daniel at Saigon on a permanent basis in the following communications: letter to Bonsal, Feb. 2 (751G.00/2–254); telegram 1355 from Saigon, Jan. 30 (711.551/1–3054); telegram 1381, Feb. 5 (711.551/2–554); telegram 1405, Feb. 9 (711.551/2–954); and telegram 1412 from Saigon, Feb. 9 (711.551/2–954). See also letter from Heath to Under Secretary Smith, Feb. 24, p. 1076.

396.1 BE/2–854 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET NIACT WASHINGTON, February 8, 1954—2:10 p. m.

1410. Limit distribution. In effort counteract Soviet proposal at Berlin for Five-Power Conference, which Eden and Bidault would have greatest difficulty rejecting outright, Secretary has worked out with them proposal for conferences on Korea and Indochina. Proposal, to be presented at restricted Berlin session Feb 8, states US, UK, USSR, France agree invite ROK, such other countries providing armed forces to UNC as may desire participate, Chinese Communists and North Koreans meet with them to settle Korean question. Also states as soon as Chinese Communist actions at Korea conference and in Southeast Asia provide proofs their spirit of peace, Four Powers will settle by common agreement conditions for Indochina conference. Precise wording on Indochina not yet firm.

Secretary has stressed to UK and French importance West avoiding any action in Berlin indicating we panicky over Indochina situation, which might reduce French chances negotiate advantageously, or which would undermine French will to resist. Conditions for Indochina conference included in Four Power proposal directed to this end. You are *informed foregoing* in strict confidence to enable you more accurately state our position in event matter becomes public.

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[1] Drafted by Popper of UNP.

SMITH

Eisenhower Library, White House Office of Staff Secretary records

Memorandum by the Assistant Staff Secretary to the President (Minnich)[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

Indo China, 2/8/54

At the Legislative Conference this date, Sen. Saltonstall[2] pointed out that Adm. Radford and Deputy Secretary of Defense Kyes had testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the need for sending technicians to Viet Nam to assist in maintaining equipment provided by the United States, and that the Committee had been very loathe to agree to this involvement of US personnel.[3] Sen. Saltonstall expected to hear much more discussion of it on the floor of the Senate.

The President said he could well understand the desire to avoid committing American troops in this war, but he did see the need for carrying on a US program in regard to Asia, and he saw some merit in using this small project to serve a very large purpose—that is, to prevent all of Southeast Asia from falling to the Communists. He recalled how the United States had despaired in the 1940's of sending more equipment to Chiang Kai-Shek because he was not able to provide maintenance for it. Now, some ten years later, we find ourselves relying on a very much weakened Chiang Kai-Shek as one of the bulwarks against complete Communist domination of the area.

Sen. Saltonstall made clear that objections pertained to involvement of US troops, that a similar objection was not raised against sending civilians, and that a difference existed between actual maintenance of equipment and mere training of French and Vietnamese personnel in how to maintain equipment.

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[1] This memorandum by L. Arthur Minnich, Jr., Assistant Staff Secretary to President Eisenhower, recorded discussions on Indochina at White House Legislative Leadership Conferences from Feb. 8 to July 26, 1954. The drafting date is not indicated on the source text, nor are the participants at each meeting.

[2] Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and member of the Appropriations Committee.

[3] In a telephone conversation with Under Secretary of State Smith on Feb. 3, President Eisenhower stated that it was necessary to consult with Congressional leaders prior to ordering the 200 mechanics to Indochina. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file, "Telephone Conversations") No record of the testimony by Radford and Kyes before the Senate Armed Services Committee has been found in Department of State files.

The President agreed that it was not completely desirable to undertake this project, but that the United States could not just stand aside in the crisis. He pointed out that we were pressing the French to increase their effort and that we were giving France firm notice that these technicians would be withdrawn on June 15th. As for sending civilian instead of military personnel, the President pointed to the length of time to recruit and transport the former, whereas the latter were already near the scene.

When the Senator repeated that the action could bring trouble with the Appropriations Committee as well as the Armed Services Committee, the President queried as to what alternative was available to prevent our position in Asia from deteriorating further. He went on to note how some risks were involved in any action we took, and that we must search our souls on these things in the light of preventing the loss of Asia.

Thinking out loud, he speculated on the possibility of utilizing Chiang's forces in Indo China, then noted that such use would incite a great flow of Chinese Communists into the area—a consideration which had led Syngman Rhee to reject any suggestion of Chiang's participation in the Korean fight. The President went on to state his continuing belief in the use of indigenous troops in any Asian battles, with the United States providing a mobile reserve for the overall security of the free world. Yet he believed that exceptions had to be made until the time when indigenous forces could be built up to an adequate point and they could be secure in the knowledge that U.S. air and naval forces stood ready to support them.

Turning again to the role of the French, the President noted the need for pressing them to do the job of which they were capable. At the same time, he was aware of how touchy were the French, M. Pleven *not* included, in regard to advice from us. The difficulty seemed to stem from the Colonial Secretary.

The discussion ended with agreement that the leadership would undertake further to explain the need for the action, and the President would begin action looking to use of civilian rather than military personnel after June 15th, should any still be needed.

At the next meeting, on February 15th, the President referred again to the subject to say that we had increased our Military Advisory Group in Indo China to take care of the need, but to last only until June 15th. After that, if absolutely necessary, the French could hire some civilians to do the job. He went on to say that the military situation was not so bad as it appeared in the newspaper accounts to be, that Gen. Navarre, because of political reasons, had had to disperse his forces to meet the several Viet Minh threats, and that Gen. Navarre could be in good shape if he could again concentrate his forces. He concluded by noting how tremendous a problem Bidault had in respect to French desires to end the struggle in Indo China.

. . . .

396.1 BE/2–954 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the President

TOP SECRET NIACT BERLIN, February 9, 1954—noon.
[Received 6:25 a.m.]

Dulte 54. For President, eyes only for Under Secretary, from Secretary. French political pressure for Indochina conference is mounting, and Bidault believes Pleven return will increase the pressure. We here are working strongly against this, but believe it should be realized in Washington that this political exertion on our part against conference carries moral obligation to continue to sustain military effort. We are proceeding here on that premise. I am somewhat disturbed by various indications that dissatisfaction with French military activity might lead Pentagon or Congress to lose interest in continuing financial and material support of French effort or to attach conditions which sensitive French would reject as inconsistent with their sovereignty.

If we succeed here in stopping French pressures for conference—which is by no means certain—and should thereafter also stop financial support or attach to it impossible conditions, the anti-American reaction in France would be very severe and almost certainly defeat European Defense Community. Obviously, we should, if at all possible, seek to assure success both in relation Indochina and European Defense Community. But also, we must be on guard lest Indochina also carry European Defense Community down the drain.

Would appreciate any guidance you see fit to give.

DULLES

751G.00/2–954 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Berlin [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 9, 1954—11:26 a.m.
PRIORITY

Tedul 33. Eyes only for the Secretary. Yesterday before I read Dulte 54 [2] I talked to Bonnet at his request about aid for Indochina.[3] I mentioned various additional ways that we might assist i.e., psychological, covert activities, training, etc. and touched on the rather cool reception given O'Daniel. At the same time I suggested desirability that Pleven and General Ely might return via Washington. It seems to me this would have two advantages. In the first place the President could get first hand report from Pleven while U.S. Chiefs of Staff heard from Ely. Then if Pleven seemed to show signs of weakening President might stiffen him up.

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[1] Drafted by Acting Secretary Walter Bedell Smith.

[2] *Supra.*

[3] No additional record of the Smith–Bonnet meeting of Feb. 8 has been found in Department of State files.

If you agree as to desirability you might make suggestion to Bidault putting it on basis of expedited and increased material assistance as result of this contact.[4]

SMITH

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[4] At 11:59 a .m., President Eisenhower called Acting Secretary Smith to discuss a variety of issues. During the conversation, aspects of the Indochina question, including the possibility of a Pleven–Ely visit to Washington, were discussed inconclusively. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file, "Telephone Conversations")

751G.00/2–954 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 9, 1954—7 p. m.

1410. Repeated information Paris 428, Hanoi unnumbered. General Navarre told me yesterday that next three months would be difficult. He expected to get through them without suffering some reverses but was by no means certain that this would be case. He obviously was less worried over possibility of losses themselves than effect they would have on Paris' support of war. He regretted that Viet Minh had given up idea of attacking Dien Bien Phu where he had possibility of inflicting substantial if not decisive defeat. He regretted that unavoidable political considerations had caused him to disperse his forces to defend Luang Prabang. From a purely military standpoint it was "idiocy" to disperse his forces to defend Luang Prabang, but he well understood that if he failed to do so the outcry and consequences in Laos, and next door in Thailand, would be disastrous. He felt that Luang Prabang could be defended against attack of a single Viet Minh division now on its way there. If Viet Minh added another division, say 308th, to this attacking force, successful defense would be very difficult, although far from impossible.

Against considerable French criticism he was insisting on carrying on his operation "atlante" in central Vietnam. Cleaning out of Viet Minh in this portion of central Vietnam was an absolute necessity if Navarre plan was to keep its schedule and achieve decisive military victory in fighting season autumn '54 to spring '55. If Viet Minh were not cleaned out from there now, next fall they would mount an operation against central Laos and Cambodia. He was much encouraged by results of "atlante" operation to date. Inhabitants really welcomed French and Vietnamese troops and they had been able to enlist nearly 1,000 of them as "partisan" auxiliary troops. He had given orders that force engaged in operation was not to yield any terrain since principal Viet Minh propaganda among villagers was that French did not intend to remain. He was also insisting that French troops and officers leave work of pacification to Vietnamese civil officials under Governor Giao. In all his communiqués he was referring to "atlante" forces as Vietnamese Army, although as matter fact three-quarters of troops were French Union soldiers.

In conclusion, Navarre said, although he might encounter difficulties, even reverses, in next three months, he was more convinced than ever of essential soundness of his "plan". He saw no reason to alter it nor did he see why he should not achieve decisive military victories in 1955.

Following our conversation he attended my luncheon for General Weyland, CINC FEAF, and General Fay, Chief of Staff French Air Force. General Fay was deploring losses of French officers in this war. Asserting that one of causes of French defeat in second world war was their officer losses in first war, he said that same thing was happening to French Army in its Indochina operations. He said flatly that France could endure these losses only one year more. Navarre took immediate exception to this. He said that if that were really spirit in which France was engaged in this war it had better pull out now.

HEATH

751G.00/2–954

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) [1]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY SAIGON, February 9, 1954.

DEAR PHIL: I am most grateful that you have taken time from your busy existence to bring us as fully up-to-date on developments in the Indochina field as you did in your letter of January 22.

We await with considerable impatience your information as to the results of top level conversations on whether the general military approach here is sufficient and as to whether preparations can or should be made in the event of a failure of the "enterprise." We used to say that the war would be won or lost in Tonkin. Now it seems that it will rather be won or lost in Paris. And yet I find it difficult to believe that defeatism and lassitude will so increase in Paris as to cause the French Government to accept some preposterous "peace offer" of Ho Chi Minh. Our influence surely should be sufficient to prevent such an occurrence. What is needed right now is what was needed last spring—two extra seasoned combat divisions. If Navarre had them, he could throw them into Thanh Hoa and Vinh, an absolutely key territory for the Viet Minh. The landing of two divisions in that sector would force the Viet Minh to scurry back from their descent on Luang Prabang and probably force them to withdraw their battalions from central Laos. They might be forced into a fairly decisive battle with the Franco-Vietnamese forces, which the latter with their air power and superior fire power desire. But there is no possibility of suddenly producing these necessary two divisions. The untrained, "unblooded", new battalions of the Vietnamese National Army will not be up to such an operation for some months to come. I suppose it is hopeless to think of a two divisional increase from France, although General Lauzin[2] told Rob McClintock that Navarre would request an extra division of Metropolitan troops from Pleven, who arrived here today.

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[1] A handwritten notation on the source text indicates that this letter was received on Feb. 23.

Judging by the Viet Minh military campaign to date it seems that the Viet Minh are anxious not to become involved in a major military engagement during the present dry season. On the contrary, they are apparently, and all too successfully, making the French disperse their forces and thus preventing them from forcing such an engagement. I draw the conclusion, therefore, that the Viet Minh war plan is presently more political than military and more aimed at French governmental and public opinion that at military victory. It is a campaign of attrition carried on in the hope that France will lose the will to continue the fight. It is for these reasons that I stress the need of additional ground troops to force the Viet Minh into action on other than their own terms.

A possibly practical suggestion is, I think, Dejean's, viz., that the Foreign Legion be increased by six regiments, mainly from Germany, through a stepped-up recruitment program. This would require, as I said in previous telegrams, that Adenauer[3] look "the other way" while the recruiting was going on. Neither we nor the French are ready to throw American or Korean battalions into the breach at this time. Yet if we all had the nerve to take this action, this war could probably be brought to a fairly quick close. I do not think China would intervene militarily, and from my personal point of view, if she did, so much the better. We would then take up the war where we left off with the unfortunate armistice in Korea, and we would win it. That is, we would put Chiang Kai-shek back on the mainland in southern China and shake, maybe even destroy, the power of the Chinese Communist Government, which is only stalling for time to march on, later, to the absorption of Southeast Asia.

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[2] Gen. Henri Lauzin, Commander of the French Air Force in the Far East.

[3] Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

To pass on to other matters in your letter, . . . during the past year the French have increasingly accepted advice and equipment and are training—not as fast as we should like perhaps—guerrilla or counterguerrilla units. The Vietnamese Defense Ministry might before long be able to use help in developing unconventional warfare, but as the Defense Ministry and National Army stand they have about all they can handle at present in forming new regular battalions. I might add that French efforts at training guerrilla or counterguerrilla units are concentrated on the hill tribes, the Thais, Muongs, etc. Because of distrust and unfortunate past experiences, they are not yet trying to develop unconventional warfare units among the Vietnamese. Some units were formed, but they were either no good or were infiltrated by the Viet Minh.

I agree there should be a general review of the national strategy with reference to the entire area. I think that that should be done regularly. There is now, however, no rabbit which we can pull out of a hat. . . .

I very definitely agree with you that we must not try to force the French to attempt any large scale program of unconventional warfare, particularly when these programs are not practical under the peculiar conditions of warfare here. My telegram no. 1381 [4] tells of Navarre's irritation over O'Daniel's attempt to sell him a team of twenty American psychological warfare officers and a remarkable scheme of ringing the Delta with a Maginot line system of barbed wire and additional small posts. When we have some sound and completely practical advice to offer, I don't think we will have any difficulty in persuading Navarre to accept it. He has, for example, given Colonel Belleux great encouragement in developing guerrilla bands in the Thai country and other places. . . . Belleux is making good, if far from spectacular, progress. Navarre's predecessors, De Lattre and Salan, both were very cold to such projects.

I was amused at Joe Alsop's pessimism. He is an emotional young man. You are quite right in retaining your confidence in the courage and good sense of Navarre, Bodet, Gambiez, Cogny, Castries and company.

Again many thanks for your very valuable letter. Never has an American diplomatic mission had more intelligent and helpful backstopping than that which SEA under your direction has provided this Embassy.

Sincerely, DONALD R. HEATH

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[4] Telegram 1381 from Saigon, Feb. 5, is not printed. (711.551/2–554)

751G.00/2–1054 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 10, 1954—7 p. m.
[Received 2:50 p. m.]

1417. Repeated information Paris 433. We much appreciate fact all top level elements our government are giving serious and constructive attention to Indochina problem. (Deptel 1400.)[1] Present military situation is disappointing in that probability of any substantial French victories during remaining three months of dry season seems not bright. On other hand, it is doubtful that Viet Minh can win substantial military victories this season although possibility of their temporarily taking Luang Prabang cannot be dismissed. Nevertheless, on balance, provided Communist China does not step up aid or intervene militarily, it would seem that strategic advantage is on our side, as Viet Minh forces cannot get much stronger numerically, while our forces are every month increasing in numbers and experience. I believe Navarre's estimate of situation and prospects as given in my 1410 of February 9 (Paris 428) is sound. However, in race against time and French public opinion, possibly this unspectacular improvement of the strategic situation will not suffice to retain that continuing and energetic support by France which is essential if this conflict is to be won.

Answering Department's specific questions, we have following comments:

(1) It seems doubtful if French can take additional political measures unless some means can be found of persuading Cambodians and as result Vietnamese to go to Paris to negotiate terms of independence under declaration of last July 3. I fail to understand the question whether declaration granting self-determination as to membership in French Union would be helpful locally. Three Associated States can invoke that right as of today in response to French declaration of last July 3. For French or for US to state this fact publicly now might well tend to encourage irrational nationalists to use this offer as springboard to a wild leap into "complete independence" which would really land them in lap of Ho Chi Minh. Once local politicians commence to orate, they will very likely stampede and come out against membership in French Union, as they did last October in National Congress, and this would most certainly result in French public opinion deciding to wash hands of further effort in this war.

(2) It is possible to secure more active and dynamic conduct of other Vietnamese leaders, but difficult to point of impossibility with Bao Dai. Any improvement in Bao Dai's performance in these respects will only come about very gradually and partially. Deficient as he is in providing dynamic leadership for a nation at war, it must be re-

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[1] Dated Feb. 5, p. 1019.

membered that he has recently been much more active, and effective, in shaping policy and public opinion and in trying to install a government tending toward national union. He is highly intelligent, patient, recondite, Jesuitical, a master of oriental intrigue, and, by his lights, devoted to a national cause which coincides with his own interest. However, in light of these qualities, he is not a man on horseback, and no communication from President Eisenhower or anyone else can change his character. However, at some future time perhaps not far removed, it might be well for the President to send a personal message and in that event, we would be glad to indicate the occasion and suggest some of its content. A more profitable line of endeavor would be to encourage Defense Minister Quat, who shows signs of original and strongminded thinking, and perhaps even young General Hinh, who has energy and courage, if not long years of experience, to produce a truly national Vietnamese army kindled with martial spirit. However, the rallying point here will not be Bao Dai, but possibly Quat, possibly Hinh, possibly Tri.

Most important political measure which could be taken internally, and which would divert attention from monotonous imprecations against France, would be to encourage political energies in preparation for step-by-step development to national elections, a national assembly, a national constitution. Such a program has in fact been announced by President Buu-loc but Buu-loc's step-by-step progression to that end is probably slower than situation demands.

One other thing that might be done would be return of Empress and Crown Prince at least to Vietnam, latter to take an officer's course at military school at Dalat and to share to some extent life of armed forces. After a year of such training and service, he could return, if necessary, to higher studies in France or continue them here.

HEATH

751G.00/2-1054 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Berlin [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 10, 1954—2 : 58 p. m.
PRIORITY NIACT

Tedul 37. Eyes only for Secretary from President.

"I refer to your Number 54 of 9 February. It is true that certain legislators have expressed uneasiness concerning any use of American maintenance personnel in Indochina. They fear that this may be opening the door to increased and unwise introduction of American troops into the area. Administration has given assurances to guard against such developments and has promised categorically to withdraw recently shipped increment of 200 air technicians no later than June 15.

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[1] Text of letter copied from a White House draft of Feb. 10 by Bonsal of PSA.

This we must do even if we have to recruit civilian technicians to take their place.

"There is no ground whatsoever for assuming we intend to reverse or ignore US commitments made to French. Those commitments were based upon assumptions that French would act comprehensively and vigorously in prosecuting war; and their commitment in this regard is as binding as is ours in providing additional money and equipment. The so-called Navarre plan visualized substantial victory by summer of 1955.

"General O'Daniel's most recent report [2] is more encouraging than given to you through French sources. I still believe that the two things most needed for success are French will to win and complete acceptance by Vietnamese of French promise of independence as soon as victory is achieved. To summarize Administration has no intention of evading its pledges in the area providing the French performance measures up to the promises made by them as basis for requesting our increased help.

"With warm regard, Eisenhower"

SMITH

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[2] For extracts from "Report of U.S. Special Mission to Indochina," Feb. 5, 1954, by Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, Chief of the Mission, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 246–258. A complete copy of the report and a two-page summary of it, dated Feb. 9, are in Eisenhower Library, White House Office Records, "Project 'Clean Up' ".

751G.5 MSP/2–1054 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Berlin [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 10, 1954—2:58 p. m.
PRIORITY NIACT

Tedul 38. Limited distribution. Ref Dulte 54.[2] Supplementing immediately preceding message,[3] we here are fully aware of French sensitivities but we nevetheless believe that some form of understanding with French Government will be necessary regarding US participation in advisory capacity in Indochina. Following quotation from Bidault's letter of Sep 29, 1953 to Ambassador Dillon regarding the additional $385 million in aid is pertinent: "The French Govt will continue to facilitate exchanges of information and views on a continuing basis between French and US military authorities and will take into account the views expressed by the latter with respect to the development and carrying out of the French strategic plans without in any way of course detracting from exclusive French responsibility for adoption and execution thereof." [4] Perhaps it might be well to approach French on basis of above in order to reach some understanding regarding MAAG Indochina which would permit expanded strength including planning staff and with authority to advise and assist in training, etc.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.

[2] Dated Feb. 9. p. 1025.

[3] *Supra.*

[4] For the exchange of letters which constituted the U.S.-French supplementary aid agreement on Indochina, Sept. 29, 1953, see p. 812.

We are fully aware of impracticability and indeed undesirability in view French sensitivities of spelling out all that we would hope expanded military mission would accomplish but believe terms of reference should be adequate to permit competent and able mission chief to make contribution of kind envisaged.

Smith

751G.00/2-1054 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET Paris, February 10, 1954—7 p. m.

2919. Repeated information Saigon 313, Berlin 224. Berlin for USDel. Limit distribution. Jacquet today made following comments to us on situation Indochina:

Viet Minh now have military initiative and may retain it throughout balance present dry weather fighting season expected end sometime May. It not certain yet whether Viet Minh will attack Luang Prabang or by-pass it as they did Dien Bien Phu and attempt take administrative capital Vientiane. Although latter not psychologically as important as Luang Prabang where King resides, Vientiane of greater strategic importance. However, if Viet Minh attack Luang Prabang, Jacquet confident French Union forces can hold it.

Although Viet Minh currently have initiative and French largely forces to block Viet Minh moves as they occur, developments on military plane going much as Navarre had anticipated and he not unduly concerned. Navarre had never expected to be in position achieve any decisive victories over Viet Minh prior to dry weather fighting season beginning next October nor had he anticipated attaining military superiority until 1955. Although indicating his full concurrence in Navarre's views, Jacquet stated he differed with Navarre on operation Atlante, which was progressing well, re using reserves at this critical juncture.

One element however of Navarre plan that has not gone as well as hoped has been development national armies Associated States and Navarre doubtful, according Jacquet, whether 100 Vietnamese battalion target would be met by end 1954.

Although not unduly concerned over course military developments Indochina, Jacquet emphasized his concern over Vietnamese political situation, describing Buu Loc Government, despite recognized honesty and ability its members, as representing unfortunately nothing. Jacquet only posed question and did not indicate what he thought might prove to be a more satisfactory alternative to Buu Loc Government. He did say French Government seriously considering exerting increased pressure on Bao Dai to take a more active role with view to increasing Vietnamese participation in support military effort. This connection, Jacquet intimated DeJean had not entirely succeeded in dealing with internal Vietnamese political situation and that this one of difficult problems facing Pleven in Indochina.

Jacquet emphasized necessity for US Government to continue to give favorable consideration French requests for Indochina and that every effort be made expedite their fulfillment, particularly B–26s. He mentioned specifically that if by beginning fighting season in October French command had total 100 bombardment aircraft (B–26s) at its disposal, this would constitute decisive element in offensives undertaken thereafter.

He said loss Laos to Viet Minh, if that should occur, bound to have unfavorable impact on French opinion and that if Laniel Government should fall between now and end present dry weather fighting season (while Viet Minh have initiative), Indochina would figure prominently in any investiture debate thereafter. Such a development could only be viewed with deepest concern. Jacquet also stressed importance with which French viewed developments at Berlin with respect to possible eventual discussion of Indochina problem within context international conference.

ACHILLES

Editorial Note

The President's news conference of February 10, 1954, included the following exchanges with regard to Indochina:

"Q. William Flythe, Hearst Newspapers: Mr. President, may I ask you about Indochina, sir, if you would care to say anything?

"The President. As I told you last week—I believe I told you last week, didn't that subject come up? I said we had increased the technical side of the training units you send out there. I forget the technical name for them—the training and administrative units that turn over the equipment, and so on—MAAGs, we call them. We have increased that. Now, recently, some of our equipment shipped to Indochina has involved airplanes, and they just didn't have the people to take care of them. So we increased that particular body by some airplane mechanics, who are to be returned from there no later than June 15th.

"Q. Mr. Flythe: Mr. President, I wanted to ask you, if I might, if these people could be considered in any way combatant troops?

"The President. No, they are not only maintenance troops, but I see no opportunity of them even getting touched by combat.

. . . .

"Q. Marvin Arrowsmith, Associated Press: Mr. President, to go back for a moment to the question on Indochina, there seems to be some uneasiness in Congress, as voiced by Senator Stennis for one, that sending these technicians to Indochina will lead eventually to our involvement in a hot war there. Would you comment on that?

"The President. I would just say this: no one could be more bitterly opposed to ever getting the United States involved in a hot war in that region than I am; consequently, every move that I authorize is calculated, as far as humans can do it, to make certain that that does not happen.

. . . .

"Q. Daniel Schorr, CBS Radio: Mr. President, should your remarks on Indochina be construed as meaning that you are determined not to become involved or, perhaps, more deeply involved in the war in Indochina, regardless of how that war may go?

"The President. Well, I am not going to try to predict the drift of world events now and the course of world events over the next months. I say that I cannot conceive of a greater tragedy for America than to get heavily involved now in an all-out war in any of those regions, particularly with large units.

"So what we are doing is supporting the Vietnamese and the French in their conduct of that war; because, as we see it, it is a case of independent and free nations operating against the encroachment of communism."

The President also stated that efforts were being made to keep the appropriate members of the legislative branch informed regarding the situation in Indochina. For the record of the news conference of February 10, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1960), pages 245–255.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 184th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, February 11, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at this meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Acting Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. The Vice President did not attend the meeting. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; Mr. Warren Olney, 3rd, for the Attorney General (for Items 1 and 3); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Items 1, 3 and 4); Mrs. Katherine G. Howard for the Federal Civil Defense Administrator (for Items 1 and 3); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the Deputy Secretary of Defense; the General Services Administrator; General Willard S. Paul, Office of Defense Mobilization; Mr. A. Russell Ash, Office of Defense Mobilization; Mr. Harold L. Aitken, Federal Civil Defense Administration; the NSC Representative on Internal Security; Bryce Harlow, Administrative Assistant to the President; and the Acting Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Feb. 12.

Following is a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

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2. *Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security*

The Director of Central Intelligence reported that the main Vietminh force moving south from Dien Bien Phu had now reached a point some 30 or 40 miles from Luang Prabang, the capital of Laos. They were now encountering some difficulty in supplies. The surrounding force which remained at Dien Bien Phu was now sufficiently reduced so that a frontal attack on the French strongpoint appeared unlikely. The Vietminh victories were rather more psychological than military in character. Mr. Dulles reported no significant changes in other areas of Indochina.

Mr. Dulles then referred to a recent report from Ambassador Heath of a conversation with General Navarre.[2] Navarre admitted that the next few months were going to be very difficult. While it was military "idiocy" to divert French Union forces to defend Luang Prabang, it was essential to do so from a political point of view. General Navarre remains convinced of the soundness of his plan, and saw no reason why he should not achieve a victory in 1955.

Referring to the discussion of last week, Mr. Dulles said that . . . the possibilities of developing more dynamic leadership in Vietnam, with particular reference to the President's emphasis on religious dynamism . . . thus far had not been very helpful. The major problem in Indochina remained political rather than military, and how to change the military and psychological climate of defeatism was extremely tough.

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[2] Reference is to telegram 1410 from Saigon, Feb. 9, p. 1026.

Mr. Dulles stated that . . . Ho Chi Minh . . . was probably still alive, but he was a very strange leader indeed. He had made no public appearances . . . .

. . . .

5. *United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia* (NSC Action No. 1019; NSC 5405)[3]

Mr. Cutler summarized previous Council action on this problem, and called the Council's attention to General O'Daniel's recent report[4] and to a variety of other intelligence, much of it conflicting, with respect to conditions in Indochina. He then called upon Secretary Smith to make his oral report.

Secretary Smith said that the problem that the Special Committee was dealing with had two phases. The first of these involved emergency assistance to the French, and Secretary Smith said he would call on Secretary Kyes to speak to this matter.

Secretary Kyes said that we had sent 200 airmen and a certain number of aircraft which the French had asked for on an emergency basis. Certain other French requests had been analyzed and found to be impractical. General O'Daniel had certain other suggestions which the Committee was in the process of scrutinizing.

There ensued a discussion of the CAT pilots. These were ready to go, said Mr. Dulles, but the French have not yet asked for them.

Admiral Radford commented in further detail on Secretary Kyes' remarks, and explained that we were sending the French 22 of the B-26 aircraft which they had requested, but that we have not yet acted on an additional 25 which the French hope to have. Admiral Radford also commented on the confusion which prevailed in the French request for additional assistance, especially as regards the number of maintenance personnel they needed for the American aircraft.

At the conclusion of this discussion, Secretary Smith turned to the second phase of the problem, namely, the political. He pointed out that the Soviets had been extremely active at the Foreign Ministers meeting in Berlin, and were doing their best to induce the French to give up the struggle in Indochina. It was, unhappily, clear that this was precisely what the French in Paris wanted to do. They were very much disappointed in the progress of the Navarre plan, and particularly depressed over the lack of response of the native population of Indochina to the hopes and promises which France had held out.

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[3] For NSC Action No. 1019, see extract from the memorandum of discussion at the 181st Meeting of the National Security Council, Jan. 21, p. 986. For extracts from NSC 5405, Jan. 16, see p. 971.

[4] See footnote 2 to Tedul 37, Feb. 10, p. 1032.

General Erskine, continued Secretary Smith, had made certain recommendations on the so-called long-term problem—alternatives open to the United States in the event that the Navarre plan fails and the French give up.[5] Secretary Smith said he would not go into detail at this point on these recommendations. He concluded by referring to the fact that Rene Pleven was now in Indochina, and that Secretary Wilson had sent him a message inviting him to return to France by way of the United States. This move of Secretary Wilson's was the result of a conversation between Secretary Dulles and Bidault at Berlin.[6]

The President commented on the extraordinary confusion in the reports which reached him from the area of Indochina. There were almost as many judgments as there were authors of messages. There were, nevertheless, only two critical factors in the situation. The first was to win over the Vietnamese population; the other to instill some spirit into the French.

Governor Stassen said that he desired to take issue with the prevailing pessimism, and stated that we were better off today in Indochina than we thought we would be a year ago. No real defeats had been endured by the French Union forces at the hands of the Viet Minh. Secretary Smith said that he perhaps would agree with Governor Stassen's judgment if it were confined strictly to the military situation. Governor Stassen went on to point out that our "funds situation" remains good, and that we were perfectly able to do what the French asked us to do without exceeding our budget. His advice, therefore, was to stick to our guns and try to see the thing through.

The President commented that the mood of discouragement came from the evident lack of a spiritual force among the French and the Vietnamese. This was a commodity which it was excessively difficult for one nation to supply to another.

Admiral Radford stated that he believed he could give some explanation of the differences in the reports which came, on the one hand, from our Service attachés and other semi-permanent personnel in Indochina, and on the other hand, from visitors like General O'Daniel. Our attachés tend to become frustrated as a result of continuously being on the scene. Moreover, they tend to look at a situation from a strictly Service point of view. It should also be remembered that General Trapnell had been captured at Bataan and had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese throughout the rest of World War II. Such an experience inevitably left its mark.

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[5] Part II of the report by the working committee headed by General Erskine to the Special Committee headed by Under Secretary Smith, Apr. 5, was concerned with the contingency here under reference. Regarding Part II of the Working Committee Report, see footnote 8, p. 1257.

[6] The proposal that Defense Minister Pleven and General Ely be invited to Washington was approved by President Eisenhower during a telephone conversation of Feb. 10. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file, "Telephone Conversations") The text of the invitation from Secretary of Defense Wilson to Pleven was transmitted to the U.S. Delegation at Berlin in telegram Tedul 39, Feb. 10. (033.5111/2–1054) In telegram Dulte 63 of the same date, Secretary Dulles reported that he had raised the question of an invitation for Pleven to visit Washington in a conversation with Foreign Minister Bidault, who had responded favorably. (033.5111/2–1054)

With respect to the efficiency of our military missions in Indochina, Secretary Smith commented that the Air Force had done by far the best job, the Navy had run a very poor second, and the Army was far behind the Navy.

Ambassador Lodge said that he had had a lot of experience in dealing with the French, and that if you get behind them and push hard enough they will do what is required.

The President observed that he had just about reached the conclusion that it was time for a change of Ambassadors in Indochina.

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396.1 BE/2-1154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, February 11, 1954—5 p. m.

1428. Repeated information Paris 437, Berlin 5. Reference Department telegram 1410 February 9. Ambassador De Jean told me yesterday that he had thought it wise to inform both Bao Dai and Buu Loc of proposal made at Berlin conference for conferences first on Korea and then on Indochina. De Jean told me, and, I understood, told Bao Dai and Buu Loc, that this proposal was merely a sop to section of French opinion calling for negotiated end to French fighting in Indochina. It was not to be understood as meaning that French Government believed that either Korea or Indochina conferences would necessarily take place or that, if they did, they would be successful in stopping hostilities. If Indochina conference occurred, France would insist on Associated States being fully represented, so that there would be no arrangement which would not fully meet their interests and need for security. De Jean told me that he thinks there is one chance in hundred that such a conference, even if it occurred, would result in any armistice; that there was no basis for armistice in this peculiar war. De Jean said both Bao Dai and Buu Loc expressed understanding, and no alarm, with respect to French proposals at Berlin conference.

On military situation, while advanced detachments of Viet Minh had come within some 25 kilometers of Luang Prabang and Pak Hou main Viet Minh force was still believed to be 60 kilometers away. They could move very quickly and come up to Pak Hou but with the 6 battalion garrison, supported by artillery at Luang Prabang, and the five Franco-Laotian battalions to the north of Luang Prabang, both De Jean and Navarre told me they were not worried about defending the town unless Viet Minh dispatched another division into Laos. It was true that French had lost contact with 312 division, but believed that it was still around Dien Bien Phu. In short, although they might well suffer reverses, French were unhappy but not worried about over-all military situation. They could always evacuate 6 of 12 battalions now at Dien Bien Phu and move them by air to reinforce any important point decisively threatened by Viet Minh.

HEATH

75[illegible].551/2-1254

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of French-Iberian Affairs (McBride)

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] February 12, 1954.

Subject: Offer of South Korean Troops to Laos.

Participants: Ambassador Bonnet, French Embassy
Mr. McBride, WE

Ambassador Bonnet called last night in a state of some agitation to protest against a statement which had appeared over the UP ticker during the afternoon attributed to a spokesman of the Department of Defense to the effect that the Laotian Government had requested troops from South Korea to fight the Viet Minh. Ambassador Bonnet said this statement was doubtless based on an article by a Mr. Lucas which had appeared in the *Washington Daily News* earlier in the day and which alleged the Laotians had made such a request. The Ambassador said he and his government were of course used to these falsifications appearing in the US press but that he thought having a Defense Department spokesman quote such a fabrication was going too far. He added that the Laotian Government had certainly never in fact requested troops from President Rhee, and that the latter was of course offering them for his own political ends. He said that in his own view the acceptance of any such proposition would be the best invitation imaginable to the Chinese Communists to intervene in force in Indochina.

After speaking with Mr. Bonbright and EUR/P on this question and after Mr. Cox[1] spoke to Major Minton, I called Ambassador Bonnet back this morning to inform him that a Department officer had called the appropriate officer in the Pentagon and taken him to task for his error. The Ambassador indicated that he had merely wished to call our attention to this incident, which he hoped would not be repeated. He said that he was not asking any formal retraction because he believed it would do more harm than good, and also because Paris had issued an unequivocal statement today which made it clear France was not disposed to have any South Korean troops fighting on her side in Indochina because of the critical danger it would cause of open large-scale Chinese intervention.

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[1] Henry B. Cox, Public Affairs Officer, Bureau of European Affairs.

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Vietnam Correspondence"

The Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Ambassador at Saigon (Heath)

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] February 12, 1954.

DEAR DON: I am very conscious of the fact that you are in the dark about a good deal that has been going on here. My ability to keep you informed has not improved since I wrote you on January 22.

The special committee appointed by the President was chaired by Roger Kyes. It has had a couple of meetings. It assigned to a subcommittee, under the chairmanship of your old friend General Erskine, the preparation of a paper on what to do about Indochina. Of the group the Defense members were in addition to General Erskine, his Deputy, Bill Godel, Tick Bonesteel who had recently been made a Brigadier General, Captain Anderson of the Navy who is an aide of Admiral Radford and Colonel Alden of General Stewart's staff (OMA). CIA was represented by George Aurell and Colonel Ed Lansdale of Philippine fame. Our representation included Bob McBride of the European Division and Charlie Stelle of the Policy Planning Staff and myself.

We spent a week on the preparation of a paper based upon a draft prepared by Godel. Our paper was submitted to the top committee on February 6.[1] We have had no positive reaction as yet.

It was my thought that our work would not be brought to a successful conclusion unless we got your ideas and those of the Embassy in Paris regarding the various notions and the courses of action upon which we were working. I was unsuccessful in putting this across. I am sending you, however, *for your eyes only information* a draft of a telegram[2] which I prepared so that you will have some idea of working level thinking here.

About the only concrete decisions which the special committee has as yet taken are those relating to the exploration through General

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[1] The draft of Feb. 6 has not been found in Department of State files. For Part I of the report of the Special Committee, Mar. 2, dealing with measures to be taken with regard to Indochina, see p. 1109.

[2] The draft telegram does not accompany the source text.

Ely of the acceptability of Mike O'Daniel as Trapnell's successor (O'Daniel would apparently have to remove one star in order to take this job—he is willing) and the invitation to Pleven and Ely to come here after they leave Indochina. Incidentally, the invitation to Pleven was only dispatched after the Secretary had consulted Bidault in Berlin and the latter had replied that he thought it a good idea. I should be surprised if Pleven comes here before he has reported in Paris on his trip to Indochina. (I dreamt last night that Pleven arrived in Washington and told us that the French had decided to get out of Indochina unless we were prepared to put in two or three divisions within ninety days.)

All this soul-searching has been conducted in an atmosphere of intense public and Congressional interest. There have been leaks galore: leaks about planes; leaks about mechanics; leaks about O'Daniel and about the special committee. Most important, there has been a leaking of pessimism and a lack of confidence in French generalship and in French intentions. In this connection, Colonel Taber's telegram of February 3d [3] made a profound impression here. The net result has been a serious loss on the psychological warfare front just at a time when the enemy is making every effort to improve his psychological warfare position and to soften up French officials and public opinion. Our chances of ultimate success in Indochina have undoubtedly been reduced. We are not yet aware of just how serious the effect of these recent developments may have been. I hope that with increasing top level realization of the harm it has done, certain countercurrents may be set in motion. So far Bidault's conduct in Berlin has been all that could be desired. Also, the statements which DeJean has made to you and which you have reported have been all to the good. We must, however, face the fact that there is extreme skepticism in the Pentagon with regard to French intentions and capabilities. O'Daniel's views are taken less than seriously by many in positions of authority although his undoubted merits as a fighter and trainer of fighters are recognized. But it is believed by many that the war will not be won unless somehow American brains and will power can be injected in decisive fashion in view of French inadequacies in strategic planning and offensive spirit. When I asked just how our brains and will power would be applied to certain concrete situations I did not get a very clear-cut answer but am left in no doubt of the convictions of those with whom I spoke. This is a field in which we must find some way of moving forward. The liaison officer concept as developed by O'Daniel and to the extent, unfortunately problematical, that it reflects a meeting of the minds between Navarre and O'Daniel may be a partial answer. But we need something more. The Erskine subcommittee starting from a purely Greek or Korean concept tried to devise something which would have a chance of acceptance by the French. Perhaps before this letter reaches you we will have telegraphed for your views in the premises. I am personally pessimistic about the chances of getting the French to accept any formal arrangement which would give us participation in their "command decisions" in the absence of any commitment of U.S. forces. But I do think that competent American officers speaking French might be able to be helpful to a marked degree and that such officers would not need any formal backing.

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[3] See footnote 3, p. 1017.

My own opinion is that there is no reason for us to change the policy which we adopted last September on the basis of a belief in the French Government's assertions of its intent regarding the war in Indochina and on the basis of our confidence in Navarre. I do not believe that military developments so far, disappointing as they are, justify a change in our attitude or a withdrawal of our confidence. We have no alternative but to play the game to the end. I do not believe the end to be far distant. I am confident that it can be a successful one.

Sincerely, PHILIP W. BONSAL

751G.5/2–1254 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 12, 1954—7 p. m.

1437. Sent Paris 444. We are seriously disturbed at defeatist attitude displayed by certain members of the French Joint Chiefs of Staff. I have in mind in particular General Fay, head of French Air Force, and General le Blanc, Chief of Staff of French Army, both of whom are currently reviewing military situation in Indochina.

Early this week at a luncheon which I tendered General Weyland, and in presence of De Jean and Navarre, General Fay loudly proclaimed his belief that France could not stand her losses in officers more than one year more. Fay likewise has made no secret in his discussions with French High Command of his general disbelief [*belief?*] in futility of French continuing struggle in this theatre.

At a banquet given by De Jean in honor of Pleven two days ago, General le Blanc in a lengthy conversation, first with Deputy Chief of Mission and then with myself, almost eagerly summed up reasons to support his belief that war here could never be won. He likewise stated that France should use its officers and troops for NATO purposes; insisted that combat training learned here of no use in Europe; and even went to length of saying that young officers who learned initiative in Indochina were of no use to him in Europe because they showed too much initiative. Le Blanc seems a jocular five-star Colonel Blimp.

General Navarre has enough to worry about in dealing with Viet Minh enemy, but if he must also fight this war with incubus of such chiefs as Le Blanc and Fay, he has a task requiring superhuman endurance and stoicism.

It seems to me that if we underwrite this war to the extent we have undertaken, we have right to query French Government at highest level as to attitude of France's top soldiers toward this war. I trust that if Pleven and Ely accept invitation of Defense Secretary Wilson and Admiral Radford (Deptel unnumbered transmitting JCS 956829 DTG 101951Z February 10),[1] they will take occasion explore this subject with these French officials.

HEATH

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[1] Not found in Department of State files, but see footnote 6, p. 1038.

751G.5/2–1354 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, February 13, 1954—2 p. m.

2951. Repeated information Saigon 319, Berlin 239. Berlin for USDel. Situation at Paris as regards IC largely in state of suspense with French being treated to a daily kaleidoscopic array of despatches from US, IC and Berlin regarding developments on military plane IC, developments at Washington regarding possible future courses of US action with respect IC, and developments at Berlin with respect to the possibility of agreement being reached on some formula that would permit the negotiations of an eventual cessation of aid to Viet Minh. There has been remarkably little reaction noted thus far at Paris to the constantly changing and often confusing picture portrayed by these despatches with the French apparently content for most part to assume a position of attentive watchfulness while reserving judgment until Pleven's views on the military situation and Bidault's views on the possibility of negotiating a cessation of Chinese Communist aid to Viet Minh have been made known.

1. Re French reaction military developments IC: While recognizing the all-too-apparent elements of weakness in the French political fabric as regards IC, the Embassy fails to share the Alsops' recently expressed view that "the French mood is such that the French Government will abandon the IC struggle if their forces in IC merely suffer a serious reverse". Although in the final analysis one can only speculate, in the Embassy's opinion, even if the Viet Minh succeed in obtaining control of substantial areas of Laos, including the cities of Luang Prabang or Vientiane, the Embassy seriously doubts whether a parliamentary or governmental majority could be found in favor of immediate abandonment of IC. While the Viet Minh threat posed

to Laos is serious and while there is considerable evidence of resignation to some degree of success being achieved during the present fighting season in Laos by the Viet Minh, fact remains that Laos does not loom as large in French thinking as Vietnam, nor would the loss of parts of Laos have the same impact on French thinking as loss of key areas in Vietnam. On balance, and as Embassy indicated in its despatch 1788 of January 14,[1] although present dry weather fighting season ends without either side having altered the relative military balance significantly, but perhaps with the French having suffered reverses in Laos (as it now appears may prove to be case), Embassy of opinion conclusion still stands that French failure to agree on satisfactory alternate solution may prove principal hope in continuation French military effort for at least another and perhaps more encouraging fighting season.

2. Re US reaction military developments IC: In broad outline reports from US this past week underscore concern evidenced at highest levels US Government over developments IC and indicate US Government making every effort to determine how best deal with situation including extent and nature possible additional US action. Although general impression conveyed by these reports one of uncertainty as to how far US prepared to go in supporting IC effort, it becoming increasingly evident to French that whereas US financial and material assistance may be augmented to meet needs of situation, the possibility of US personnel being sent Indochina to participate combat missions under present circumstances remote. Despite absence any non-Communist criticism over disclosure French request for US air maintenance personnel and subsequent announcement that 200 US technicians being sent Indochina, Embassy still considers that as far as French thinking is concerned, so long as Chinese Communists do not actively enter war, hope of reaching an early and satisfactory solution of Indochina conflict hinges on avoidance involvement US or allied troops and risks thereby of internationalizing war. Hence President's position in opposition sending US troops Indochina under present circumstances[2] not expected provoke any significant reaction France. (Foreign Office source quoted by AFP as stating President's position "conforms to French thesis").

3. Re Berlin developments, while watching course military developments Indochina with one eye, French continue to watch Indochina aspect of developments at Berlin with other eye, and perhaps even more closely. Undeniably, and apart from how it is to be arrived at or when rationale adopted, French appear to be generally hopeful and in fact expectant that Bidault can find some way to negotiate a termina-

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[1] Despatch 1788 from Paris, Jan. 14, an estimate of "Probable French Courses of Action with respect to Indochina over the Next Three to Six Months," is not printed. (751G.5 MSP/1-1454)

[2] See editorial note regarding the President's news conference of Feb. 10, p. 1034.

tion of aid to Viet Minh. However, and almost for first time, French journalists are beginning to pose question as to what the Chinese Communist price might be for cessation of aid. In this context, and in relation to limited FE conference proposals made at Berlin, Embassy fears that US might bear brunt of blame should no agreement be reached envisaging conference on Indochina with US present following one on Korea. French opinion becoming increasingly speculative as to what part, if any, of Communist China's price US would be willing to pay. If Bidault returns and indicates that he was unsuccessful in finding some formula offering hope of ending Chinese Communist aid to Viet Minh, increasing consideration may be expected to be given in France looking toward eventual direct negotiations with Viet Minh.

ACHILLES

751G.00/2–1554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in the Philippines (Spruance) to the Department of State

SECRET MANILA, February 15, 1954—4 p. m.

1763. Sent Saigon priority 134, repeated information Department 1763. Representative French Minister Manila called on Consulate General former's request to explain that, as instructed by three Associated States, irrespective emergency involved minimum two weeks required French Legation Manila to provide visas for US technicians passing from Clark Field to Saigon at French request. He explained, as we already know, that this rule applies to all visa applicants at Manila. He wished emphasize that no exception could be made for US technicians and moreover that we would have to bear cost of making telegraphic inquiry of Saigon.

This situation obviously ridiculous. Is it not possible for these technicians to be admitted Indochina with individual identification and competent military orders only? Next group RQ technicians may be scheduled for departure any moment. Embassy grateful your assistance French and Associated States authorities Saigon and if possible proper instructions French Minister Manila.

SPRUANCE

751G.5/2–1554 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 15, 1954—6 p. m.

1450. Repeated information Paris 445, Hanoi unnumbered. It seems to us that Washington is taking an unduly alarmist view of recent

Viet Minh operations in north and central Laos and high plateaus. One almost gets impression that in Washington fear is that French may suffer very substantial if indeed not decisive defeats during remainder present crisis and that Navarre's plan or schedule which contemplates breaking back of large scale Viet Minh military resistance with year or fifteen months from now is no longer realizable.

That is not view of Gen. Navarre who convinced his plan will move forward on schedule whatever reverses he may suffer in Laos in next three months. He admits possibility reverses since he has had for inescapable political reasons disperse his forces defend Luang Prabang, an action which he describes as "idiocy" from military point of view, but politically necessary keep Laotians and Vietnamese and Cambodians as well confident they will be protected if they remain in French Union. One thing that very greatly worries him is that new and existing units Vietnam national army, or rather many of their officers, not yet showing requisite fighting spirit and military efficiency. Efforts being made however with some promise of success give proper instruction and indoctrination to Vietnamese officer corps. He complains bitterly that at present he has use French and French Union units for all difficult military tasks because there are only relatively few Vietnamese units ready for severe combat. Another worry, which he has not directly avowed to me, is that he may be restrained by Paris from taking chances and losses which are part of any successful military operation. Certainly defeatist attitude of such high French officers as Generals Blanc and Fay (my telegram 1437)[1] is far from encouraging. A third worry is that French may not give him the modest increase in cadres and personnel he is now demanding. Gen. Trapnell, other competent observers, and I believe his plan sound and, providing above mentioned problems are solved, and of course subject proviso that China does not intervene militarily, we believe Navarre will fulfill his plan. Gen. Trapnell points out that while over-all Viet Minh strength practically same as year ago, except for some increase in equipment and training, French forces, ground, sea, and air, considerably stronger than year ago. What makes over-all situation look unsatisfactory is present dispersal of French troops throughout Indochina.

I understand that top level discussions in course in Washington with aim of seeing whether there is anything we can do ensure success of Gen. Navarre's plan on schedule or provide alternate plan or variants which would accelerate victorious action against Viet Minh.

I assume it politically impossible persuade France rapidly furnish massive reinforcements, say in the order of two or three divisions, which could turn present stalemate into early victory. It is of course clear that it not our policy nor that of France for US participate as belligerents at least at this stage. I also assume that French have no available candidate clearly superior to Navarre who could successfully replace him now. Navarre may not have blinding energy and inspirational quality which marked Marshal DeLattre when latter first came to Indochina, but he an extremely intelligent, sound, stubborn soldier with plan for victory and the present no time to change horses in mid stream unless a clearly better steed is available.

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[1] Dated Feb. 12, p. 1043.

Given these assumptions, there is no rabbit we can pull out of hat now to produce sudden victory. There are, however, a number of things which we can and should do to ensure and expedite victory. Most of them we cannot do directly. Mainly we must work through Vietnamese and/or French.

(1) First we should back Navarre vis-à-vis his own government and Vietnamese as long as we are satisfied that his conduct and concept of war are effective.

(2) Secondly, we should streamline our concept and operation of FOA mission here so that its program more directly serves cause of winning war. That does not mean its projects should all be of direct military interest. Projects should serve convince Vietnamese people their government is doing utmost for them, is thoroughly concerned with their welfare and providing them with something concrete, whereas Viet Minh gives them only promises and misery. Unfortunately, however capable FOA mission is, it cannot itself, alone, initiate a program sufficient to win large masses of people over to Bao Dai regime. New government has announced it is going to give us its ideas of new program for FOA. Until it has produced first draft, we can neither consult usefully with it nor reorganize or possibly expand our operations here. Meanwhile, we can attempt prod government to present us with superior program.

(3) We can increase our contribution, not necessarily in terms of greatly increased expenditure, to psychological warfare program which Hellyer,[2] head USIS here, has, after much work, finally gotten off to a start with Quat, Vietnamese Defense Minister, and Hinh, Vietnamese Chief of Staff.

(4) We are already making contribution to increased French practice of "unconventional warfare" with some small but promising results. Unfortunately, we can only move rather slowly in this direction. We now working only with French and can hardly start now a program with Vietnamese Defense Ministry, which has about all it can do at present to expand its regular army units and shortly will be faced with problem of developing a militia in auxiliary support of regular forces. . . .

(5) We must support Buu Loc as long as he gives promise of leading a government which is a sufficient improvement on its predecessors. Meanwhile, we can support through facilities of STEM or MAAG or other American groups the efforts of such members as have shown ability to make progress. At present there are not many: Governor

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[2] George M. Hellyer.

Tri of Tonkin, Quat, Defense Minister, and Hinh, Chief of Staff, who if not ideal is still only man presently in sight head up Vietnamese army. Perhaps Pham Van Huyen, Minister of Labor, may turn out to be a doer and, in that event we should try to support his project.

Fortunately, present first-hand review of Indochinese war situation being undertaken by Ministers of French Government and their principal military collaborators may serve as catalyst to thinking on how to win this war and to maintain victory by indigenous means after military phase of conflict is over. If, as I hope, Pleven and Ely accept invitation of Defense Secretary Wilson and Admiral Radford, I believe that it will be possible formulate program of constructive action and achieve our policy goals in this area. We shall be prepared to comment at that time and Department should, if Pleven and Ely proceed to Washington, welcome any opportunity personally to discuss these matters with my government. If there is to be high level discussion in Washington, certainly Gen. Trapnell, who has most thorough knowledge and clearest view of this military situation of any American officer who has had to do with Indochina problem, should be present.

HEATH

751G.00/2-1554

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Acting Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 15, 1954.

Subject: Your discussion on Indochina with Senate Foreign Relations Committee in executive session on February 16.[2]

Attached are some condensed notes on major factors in the current Indochina situation. These notes are divided as follows: military framework, political framework, United States assistance, current military situation, current political situation, enemy objectives, United States objectives and the work of the President's Special Committee (on the latter points these notes may not be entirely abreast of latest developments).

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.

[2] For the testimony of Walter Bedell Smith, Acting Secretary of State, and Adm. Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Feb. 16, see *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 83d Cong., 2d sess., 1954 (Historical Series, vol. VI, made public in 1977), pp. 108–116.

By memorandum of Feb. 17, drafted by Bonsal, Assistant Secretary of State Robertson transmitted nearly identical briefing information to Acting Secretary Smith in preparation for his appearance in executive session before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Feb. 18. (751G.00/2-1754) No record of Smith's testimony has been found in Department of State files.

This meeting has aroused a great deal of press interest. It will make an important contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the committee regarding the admittedly critical situation which the French and we face in Indochina. It is to be hoped that the impression which will reach the press as to the proceedings of this executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee will include:

(*a*) Appreciation of French and Vietnamese efforts and sacrifices in the face of a powerful enemy,

(*b*) Conviction that France harbors no narrow colonial goals but is in fact fighting on behalf of her equal associates in the French Union, and

(*c*) Confidence in French generalship and determination and belief that carrying out of current strategic concept, with stepped up help from us in present framework, can achieve highly important results.

A continued flow of pessimism and mistrust from here could tip the precarious balance of French support for the Indochina war in the wrong direction.

[Annex]

Memorandum Prepared by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (*Bonsal*)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

Subject: Notes on Indochina for Acting Secretary's appearance before executive session of Senate Foreign Relations Committee February 16.

1. *Military Framework of Indochina War now in its Eighth Year:* 140,000 French and other non-natives and over 400,000 natives of Associated States plus French financial and end-item support plus U.S. financial and end-item assistance (currently over 60%) versus 300,000 natives in Vietminh plus vital Chinese Communist assistance in matériel, supplies, training and advice.

2. *Political Framework:* Important part of nationalist movement is controlled by and supports Ho Chi Minh and his Communist apparatus; another part, probably less important, supports Bao Dai and his government and, finally, an important segment is on the fence in the area of non-Communist control. A clearer prospect of victory rather than further promises of independence already agreed to by the French would be the most effective generator of political vitality on our side and would subtract from enemy support. In France, the support of public and parliamentary opinion for the war is at a dangerously low ebb. There is some defeatism in high French quarters, military and civilian.

3. *United States Assistance* is now being rendered in the framework of the Laniel–Navarre concept set forth in an exchange of notes in

September, 1953, in which France pledged affirmative military and political action and U.S. agreed to further aid ($385 million additional for FY54). Concept got off to an auspicious start. It contemplates decisive blows against the enemy's regular forces in the fighting season which begins October 1, 1954.

4. *Current Military Situation* (presumably to be described by Defense representative). Estimates by our military observers vary widely.

5. *Current Political Situation:* Negotiations between the French and the Vietnamese, on a basis of equal sovereignty and membership in the French Union are to take place in Paris beginning February 25. A Franco-Laotian treaty was signed last November. Relations between France and Cambodia have improved markedly in recent weeks and negotiations in Paris should take place in the near future. The Vietnamese Government is working on a plan to create a representative National Assembly in the next few months.

6. *Enemy Objective* is, in part, to create an impression of military progress (real estate victories) in connection with the Berlin talks and to soften up French public and official opinion. But enemy has in fact made no important military progress. Navarre and Cogny still believe in success of their strategic concept which involves largely defensive moves this season followed by decisive offensive actions next year. These actions will be made possible by the increased manpower being recruited and trained on our side (over 120,000 new men for Vietnamese Army in 1953 and 1954 plus perfected training and equipping of pre-existing forces).

7. *United States Objective* should be to do everything possible (*a*) to insure the success of the Navarre Plan, so long as our military authorities believe such success attainable, (*b*) to promote support of and confidence in the Navarre Plan in France and (*c*) to strengthen French resistance to fallacious negotiation proposals and cease fire offers. The loss of Indochina to the Communists would set off political repercussions throughout Southeast Asia and elsewhere that would be most dangerous to our national security interests. A defeat in Indochina or a desertion of its non-Communist allies by France would mean a serious blow to France's position as an important element in free world defense.

8. *President's Special Committee* on Indochina was designated January 16. To date it has

(*a*) Coordinated emergency aid to French (planes and mechanics).

(*b*) Taken certain steps to promote closer top level Franco-American cooperation on Indochina. (Invitation to Pleven and Ely: since no answers yet received, it may be undesirable to discuss with Senators.)

(*c*) Taken under consideration a number of recommendations of a military and political nature designed to render U.S. assistance more effective in the present framework, i.e., limited to money, matériel and advice plus possible covert participation in unconventional warfare activities. Chief among these recommendations is one for ensuring a continuous flow of U.S. advice and aid by raising present MAAG to a military mission with expanded strength, including a planning staff and with authority to advise and assist in training and planning and to make recommendations concerning the conduct of operations. The serious problem of not wounding French sensitivities or undermining essential French self-confidence must be faced here.

9. *Finally*, U.S. Government is studying merits of various courses of action that would be open to it if it appears clear that present Franco-Vietnamese military and political efforts within present framework of U.S. assistance will be insufficient to keep Indochina out of Communist hands. The views of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee are vital to progress in this matter.

751G.00/2–1654 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, February 16, 1954—7 p. m.

2974. Repeated information Saigon 324, Berlin 247. Berlin for USDel. Foreign Office official stated today:

1. Although Berlin conference may end without agreement being reached on meeting with Communist China at Geneva in April, fact that US, Great Britain and France have agreed in principle on eventual discussion Indochina problem with Communist China provides Bidault with a sufficiently strong position to marshal support for continued exploration this line at Paris. Pursuance this line also permits unhurried approach problem negotiation and thus provides needed time to improve French Union military position Indochina and strengthen Vietnamese national army.

2. Jacquet, as reflected in recent press articles, has proposed to Council of Ministers elimination office Commissioner General for Indochina on basis it serves no useful purpose and French representation accredited individual states sufficient. However, this personal view Jacquet and impossible as yet tell what Bidault's and Pleven's views will be this regard.

ACHILLES

751G.00/2–1754 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, February 17, 1954—10 a. m.

1469. Repeated information Paris 450, Hanoi unnumbered. During recent weeks tension between journalists covering Indochina war and

French military censorship, which unfortunately is under direct personal supervision of General Navarre, has heightened to dangerous proportions. Recent flap in US and France over alleged military crisis in this theater and consequent demands of home editors on their correspondents here for exciting news or dope stories on what future holds have served to bring censorship issues to a head. Navarre has twice in one week sent this officer to call on DCM to protest stories filed by American correspondents, while correspondents for their part have been active in protesting to Embassy at what they consider cautious and stupid censorship by Navarre's military aides.

We have endeavored both with Navarre's officers and with more responsible journalists to point out that path of mutual accommodation is one which both sides must follow. We note, however, that French journalists themselves are in advance of American correspondents in voicing indignation at military censorship and have even proposed in International Correspondents Association of Indochina, which was established last night, that a form of ultimatum be sent to Navarre demanding that he change his censorship policy or take the consequences. It is encouraging to note that Durdin of *New York Times* and Mecklin of *Time-Life* have sounded counsels of moderation and would rather try to work out their problems by negotiation.

Believe this not unusual difficulty because of importance it occupies in Navarre's thinking and because he feels that half his battle must be fought with French public opinion.

HEATH

751G.00/2–1754 : Telegram

The Chargé at Berlin (Parkman) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET BERLIN, February 17, 1954—9 p. m.

889. Repeated information Saigon 1, Paris 202. Secretary at lunch February 17 with Bidault emphasized overriding importance Navarre put forth maximum effort between now and rainy season. Secretary pointed out possibility agreement being reached here on Korean conference which would go on to matter Indochina. Underlined probability that Viet Minh would act under such circumstances as North Koreans did just before conclusion armistice, i.e., make maximum military effort to achieve if not total victory then at least most favorable possible military position before opening talks. Bidault agreed completely and said he would vigorously press this point of view in Paris.

PARKMAN

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 185th Meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, February 17, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

The following were present at the 185th meeting of the Council: The President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Acting Secretary of State; the Acting Secretary of Defense; the Acting Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General (for Items 1, 2 and 4); the Secretary of Commerce (for Item 4); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Items 1, 2 and 4); the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Research & Development); Mr. Slezak for the Secretary of the Army; the Acting Secretary of the Navy; the Acting Secretary of the Air Force; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. Bolte for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; the Chief of Naval Operations; the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force; the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps; the Director of Central Intelligence; Gen. John E. Hull, Department of Defense (for Item 7); Gen. Willard S. Paul, Office of Defense Mobilization, and Mr. Shapley, Bureau of the Budget (for Items 1 and 2); Mr. Sullivan, Department of Defense, Mr. Ash, Office of Defense Mobilization, and Mr. Hurley, Office of Defense Mobilization (for Items 1 and 2); the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the NSC Representative on Internal Security; Richard L. Hall, NSC Special Staff Member; Bryce Harlow, Administrative Assistant to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

A summary of the discussion at the meeting follows, together with the main points taken.

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3. *Contemplated Offer by President Rhee of an ROK Division for Service in Indochina*

At the suggestion of Secretary Kyes, Admiral Radford explained that when General Hull returned to his post he would have to be in a position to discuss with President Rhee the latter's proposed offer to send an ROK division to help the French Union forces in Indochina. General Hull was accordingly in need of guidance. Admiral Radford explained that the Chief of Staff of the Army thought that

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Feb. 18.

President Rhee's proposal had merit, as did General Hull himself. The United States would, of course, be obliged to transport the ROK division and provide logistic support for it. However, we had the matériel on hand to do this, both in Korea and in Indochina. There were, continued Admiral Radford, certain advantages and certain disadvantages in Rhee's proposal. Admiral Radford had no report as to General Twining's reaction, but explained that Admiral Carney believed that if Rhee made this offer it should be made to the French and not to the Government of Laos, which had originally appealed for assistance when the Vietminh incursion into its territory took place. Finally, said Admiral Radford, the State Department had not as yet had any opportunity to study the problems raised by Rhee's offer.

The President indicated that his immediate reaction was that the offer required most careful study, not least of all for the possible effect it might have in provoking Communist China. In addition, said the President, how would the American public react to a situation in which the United States continued to maintain forces in Korea while a whole division of the ROK Army was sent out of the country? After all, our most immediate concern has been to assist Korea to take care of itself. Should we, then, let the South Koreans go "adventuring" in foreign parts? One last thing, said the President: If we transport the Korean division and put it down in Indochina, was not this sufficient notice that the United States was involving itself in the war? All these points had to be looked at, said the President, and he was anxious to have General Hull express an opinion.

General Hull stated that the problem was more political than military. All he needed to know was our Government's reaction to Rhee's proposal to make this offer. General Hull said that he did not think that the United States should let itself get directly involved, and that he believed he could handle Rhee if he were authorized to tell him that his proposed offer was receiving consideration by the United States Government. We of course should not accept the offer or sponsor it, but merely tell Rhee whether or not it would embarrass the United States to have him make this offer.

Secretary Smith said that, in connection with the issue raised by General Hull, the Council should be aware that President Rhee was proposing to increase the number of ROK divisions from 20 to 35. This presented new problems, but as for the offer of the division, this Government should scrutinize the proposal very, very carefully. About all that General Hull could safely tell Rhee at the present time was that his proposal was being considered by the United States Government at the highest levels.

The President concurred in Secretary Smith's suggestion, and indicated that he wished Admiral Radford to consider also whether it was desirable for the ROK Army to go from 20 to 35 divisions. At first glance, said the President, it seemed to him highly doubtful whether South Korea could provide sufficient replacements to support an army of 35 divisions.

The National Security Council: [2]

a. Agreed that General Hull should be authorized to advise President Rhee that this contemplated offer is being considered at the highest levels in the United States Government; and that the NSC Planning Board should prepare recommendations thereon for Council consideration.

b. Noted the President's request that the Department of Defense study and report to the Council, through the NSC Planning Board, on the desirability of an increase in the number of ROK Army divisions from the 20 presently authorized to 35, as suggested by the ROK Government.

Note: The above actions approved by the President and subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense for implementation.

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[2] Points *a* and *b* below constituted NSC Action No. 1043, Feb. 17. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

Editorial Note

The following exchange occurred at the President's news conference of February 17, 1954:

"Q. Louis Lautier, National Negro Press Association: Is there any way to distinguish between aid to the anti-Communist forces in Indochina and support of colonialism?

"The President. Well, of course. You have asked the very question that is the crux of this whole thing at this moment. There is no colonialism in this battle at all.

"France has announced several times, and most emphatically last July, that they are fighting to give the three associated states their freedom, their liberty; and I believe it has been agreed they would live inside the French Union, but as free and independent states.

"Now, as I see it, the Vietnamese are fighting for their own independence, and I have no trouble at all making the distinction that you speak of.

"We are not trying to help anybody support and maintain colonialism."

"Q. Henry Pierre, *Le Monde* (Paris): Mr. President, there have been some reports that General O'Daniel will be sent back to Indochina with increased responsibilities. Does it imply, in your opinion, some criticism about the way the Vietnamese troops have been trained up to now?

"The President. No. I think, first of all, to get a real answer to your question why there should be a change in the head of that mission out there—Trapnell, I believe is there now—I believe you better go to the

Defense Department; but it merely means there would be a man to relieve Trapnell in Indochina."

For the record of President Eisenhower's news conference of February 17, 1954, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, pages 269–278.

396.1 BE/2–1854 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT BERLIN, February 18, 1954—1 a. m.

Dulte 87. For Acting Secretary from Secretary. Re Dulte 86.[1] Bidault is instructed by Cabinet to accept this latest Soviet offer and we consider it acceptable in itself apart from necessity avoiding break with France which would imperil both Indochina and EDC.

(1) Principle of no five power conference is upheld; (2) there is no promotion of Communist China to position of authority and prestige; (3) we are negotiating with Communist China only on *de facto* basis in relation to concrete local problems of war and peace where that regime is a necessary party; (4) composition for Korea is as we sought and India is excluded; and (5) our choice of place is accepted.

I have emphasized to Bidault that prospect of conference on Indochina will increase Communist effort for knock out this season and must be met with corresponding determination to win good negotiating position.

DULLES

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[1] Telegram Dulte 86 from Berlin, Feb. 17, contained the text of a Soviet revision of a British draft of that portion of the Final Communiqué of the Berlin Conference. (396.1 BE/2–1754) For text of the pertinent portion of the Final Communiqué, issued Feb. 18, see *infra*. For full documentation on the negotiations at Berlin, see volume VII.

396.1 BE/2–2454

Department of State Press Release

No. 84 [WASHINGTON,] February 19, 1954.

COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE QUADRIPARTITE MEETING OF THE FOUR FOREIGN MINISTERS AT BERLIN, FEBRUARY 18, 1954[1]

A meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, Mr. John Foster Dulles,

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[1] For the full text of the communiqué, see volume VII.

M. Georges Bidault, Mr. Anthony Eden, and M. Vyacheslav Molotov, took place in Berlin between January 25 and February 18, 1954. They reached the following agreements:

(A)

The Foreign Ministers of the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, meeting in Berlin,

Considering that the establishment, by peaceful means, of a united and independent Korea would be an important factor in reducing international tension and in restoring peace in other parts of Asia,

Propose that a conference of representatives of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Chinese People's Republic, the Republic of Korea, the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, and other countries the armed forces of which participated in the hostilities in Korea and which desire to attend shall meet in Geneva on April 26 for the purpose of reaching a peaceful settlement of the Korean question;

Agree that the problem of restoring peace in Indochina will also be discussed at the conference, to which representatives of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Chinese People's Republic and other interested states will be invited.

It is understood that neither the invitation to, nor the holding of, the above-mentioned conference shall be deemed to imply diplomatic recognition in any case where it has not already been accorded.

[Here follows the portion of the communiqué dealing with regulation of armaments, Germany, Austria, and European security.]

751G.5/2–1854 : Telegram

The Chargé in Japan (Parsons) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL TOKYO, February 18, 1954—7 p. m.

2024. Repeated information Saigon 54, Bangkok 38, Phnom Penh 2.

1. In recent conversation with Embassy officer Foreign Office Southeast Asia desk officer asked for United States estimate of Indochina military situation, explaining that government worried by prospect of opening mission in Saigon only to have to withdraw soon after should Communists take over. His remarks, generally pessimistic in tone, emphasized ability and presumed intention of Chinese Communists to step up aid to Viet Minh and recent indications that French-Vietnamese cause losing popular support. He stated if Saigon were in near future to agree to exchange envoys, Japanese might have to

turn down proposal or stall. He concluded by inquiring whether United States might send combat troops to bolster French effort or whether letting defense of Vietnam remain primarily French responsibility we might concentrate on building joint Thai-Cambodian defense system (presumably based on Mekong River).

2. Embassy officer stated that our view was that French Union Forces would be able stabilize situation within two years. Our policy was to lend all possible assistance to French-Vietnamese Forces short of commitment American combat troops to prevent loss Indochina to Communists.

3. Embassy regards inquiries as feeler prompted by Japanese alarm over press reports indicating serious deterioration Indochina situation. Acting Secretary's statement to Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday,[1] which placed these reports in proper perspective, should prove useful in allaying Japanese fears. Embassy has called Foreign Office's attention to it. Believe continuing evaluations and public statements this nature by high American officials as well as any information we can give government in confidence would be valuable here.

PARSONS

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[1] See footnote 2, p. 1049.

751G.00/2–1954 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, February 19, 1954—3 p. m.

445. Repeated information Saigon 339, Paris 187. Paris limit distribution. French Army Secretary Dechevigne, discussing widely published reports that General O'Daniel may head military mission in Indochina, said last night "we know nothing of the matter," but declared that French would gladly accept whatever US wished contribute to war here, "including Generals". He spoke highly of American equipment furnished to forces here, both as to quality and quantity, but added that by itself equipment could not alter present equilibrium which might, in theory at least, continue as much as "10 or 15 years longer". However, Dechevigne said, French people are tiring so rapidly of this war that if elections were held today they would produce "250 Communist Deputies and 200 others, non-Communist but pledged to end war here".

Asked what his formula was for solution in Indochina acceptable to non-Communist world, Dechevigne replied there were only two possibilities for any kind of solution, acceptable or otherwise: Total war or negotiated settlement. France alone is not capable of waging total war; therefore this solution, if adopted, of necessity implies internationalization of conflict. Dechevigne let it be understood that he would not be averse to such a development. With regard to negotiated settlement, he said there was clearly nothing to be gained now in seeking an arrangement with Viet Minh.

Returning to question of French public opinion, Dechevigne said that end of fighting in Korea had profoundly influenced French thinking, despite obvious differences between two situations. Net impression left in French minds is simply that enormous difficulties were overcome in Korea to put an end to the fighting, and that what was done there should somehow be possible here. He referred approvingly to Walter Lippmann's article "Mr. Dulles and the basic decision" (*Paris Herald Tribune* January 18) as offering a realistic appraisal of France's position in Indochina and suggesting a reasonable US attitude toward that position. Dechevigne remained unresponsive to suggestion that progressive build-up of Vietnamese National Army might be substitute for internationalization of Indochina War, saying only that small increases in strength on this side would automatically be offset by Viet Minh and their Chinese Communist allies.

Comment: AFP correspondent set off flurry yesterday by filing press despatch to effect French Defense Minister Pleven met with Chinese Communist representatives at Haiphong airport. (Pleven actually spent yesterday in Phnom Penh, returning Hanoi late last night.) Follow-up despatch, which was suppressed by censorship, claimed Governor Tri's administration had launched this rumor as trial balloon to discover what Pleven is really doing here. General Cogny told me last night it had even been reported he was harboring Chinese Communist delegates in his headquarters.

Wild though these rumors be, ready audience they find is still symptomatic of suggestibility of local population, which has been heightened by extension of military operations and successive visits here in recent weeks of most leading figures of French defense establishment. AFP has long been source of damaging rumors regarding local political and military scene.

STURM

751G.00/2–2054 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 20, 1954—6 p. m.

1497. Repeated information Paris 455, Vientiane unnumbered. I saw Laotian King and Prince Savang at Luang Prabang and Prince Souvanna Phouma at Vientiane February 17. All three expressed appreciation of my visit and assurances that we desired to lend all possible assistance to Laos in dark moments of its second invasion by Viet Minh. Although one regular Viet Minh battalion and equivalent battalion Viet Minh Regional Troops within few kilometers Luang Prabang, none of three rulers is worried about ability garrison religious capital to repel attack up to divisional even two divisional strength. On contrary, they feel real confidence that Viet Minh will have to abandon idea of attacking Luang Prabang, if they have not already given up that project, and may be defeated or forced to withdraw from Muong Sai.

Savang and Souvanna Phouma were congratulating themselves on having ordered a "scorched earth" program in approaches to Luang Prabang. Savang insisted that this program, which had greatly added to grave food and supply difficulties of Viet Minh, had "saved" that city from attack.

Comment: I doubt that drastic "scorched earth" program was carried out over large area but certainly some villages were destroyed and Viet Minh advance undoubtedly complicated.

Savang stated that only a few days were necessary to complete fortification of Luang Prabang. Thereafter garrison force would attack two Viet Minh battalions in vicinity and drive them back to north. Prince insisted that food and military supply difficulties of Viet Minh were so great that he personally anticipated by, say, March 15, Viet Minh would have to call off greater part of their invasion, although they might seek, he thought, to occupy and hold a northern border—one along entire Chinese-Laotian frontier whence, in view of difficulties in distances and routes, it would be hard to expel them at any early date. Such an occupation would not be of great immediate military importance or of danger to really populated sections of Laos.

Savang expressed entire confidence in military ability of Colonel Crevecoeur commanding Northern Laos but was rather critical of General Franchi, who commanded in center and who should, in Savang's view, with his superior strength, have forced early defeat and retreat of Viet Minh forces there.

As result of "scorched earth" program and Viet Minh advance, Laotian Government was having to look after some 3,000 refugees not far from Luang Prabang, but having no difficulties in feeding and supplying them. In fact, government had expected 15,000 refugees but their evacuation was prevented by rapidity of Viet Minh advance.

Savang expressed hope that this would be last Viet Minh invasion of Laos, although later might infiltrate or even occupy remote frontier region south of China border. Souvanna Phouma expressed about same views and hopes as Prince Savang. His principal concern was that Viet Minh occupation of Thakhek destroyed his public works office there and supplies for area. With this loss, he said that public works part of Laotian five-year plan would be severely injured and delayed.

Comment: DeJean today rather confirmed Savang's optimistic view. He said French Command was not too worried over Laotian situation. He said there had been some indications of withdrawal to north of certain Viet Minh units and Intelligence that some ten percent of Viet Minh forces were suffering from dysentery and that fifty percent of Viet Minh coolie forces were ill.

HEATH

751G.00/2–2154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 21, 1954—5 p. m.

1501. Repeated information Paris 456. Cf. Embtel 1495, February 19;[1] penultimate paragraph Embtel 879, November 19, 1953. Navarre asked to see me before my dinner for Governor Stassen[2] last night.

He remarked he wanted to speak to me with entire frankness. He said General Ely had received an inquiry, he understood from Admiral Radford, as to acceptability of General O'Daniel as replacement for General Trapnell. Ely had told him that proposed nomination would involve O'Daniel's reduction to rank of Major General. Navarre told Ely that "of course" General O'Daniel would be very acceptable as replacement for Trapnell provided his attributions did not exceed those of Trapnell. He knew and liked General O'Daniel. He regretted that this appointment would involve O'Daniel's temporarily losing "one star". In view of newspaper stories regarding increase in powers and functions of MAAG, however, he wanted it clearly understood from start that his very willing acceptance of General O'Daniel was predicated on understanding that latter's functions were limited to military assistance. He would always be glad to receive any suggestions and to hear O'Daniel's ideas and he would be more than glad to accept presence, advice, and service of individual military specialists, including specialists on troops and officer training. Any good ideas the General or any of officers might produce would be put into effect wherever practical. It should be clearly understood that neither O'Daniel nor MAAG was to have any powers, advisory or otherwise, in conduct and planning of operations or in training of national armies and cadres. As Commander-in-Chief he had supreme military responsibility here and he could not share or delegate it to MAAG or its chief. If any such idea were entertained, he would prefer to resign his command here.

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[1] Telegram 1495 from Saigon, Feb. 19, containing Ambassador Heath's report of a discussion with Commissioner General Dejean, is not printed. (711.551/2–1954)

[2] Harold E. Stassen, Director of the Foreign Operations Administration, was on visit in Indochina in the course of a trip to Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

He remarked that after long negotiations he had been successful in re-establishing his command over training of Vietnamese National Army. Ostensibly training of Vietnamese Army would still be vested in Vietnamese Defense Ministry, but latter had finally agreed that a French officer, who would be proposed by Navarre, would have command of such training and that latter would take such orders and guidance as Navarre might give him.

HEATH

751G.00/2–2154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 21, 1954—6 p. m.

1504. Repeated information Paris 457. Prior to his talk with me (mytel 1501, February 20) General Navarre briefed Governor Stassen on military situation. Navarre insisted that schedule and lines of his plan were unaffected by recent military developments Laos. He had always foreseen that Viet Minh might invade Laos. He had expected present campaign season, ending May, to be difficult since opposing forces were more or less in balance. Only point his plan necessary postpone for moment was clean-up of south due to necessity of sending reserves from that region to withstand Viet Minh push in Laos. He had not had to sacrifice, however, his more important point of cleaning up center in order, next autumn, to throw expanded battalions against Viet Minh in north. Initial operations in center were proceeding extremely satisfactorily.

He rehearsed past six month's military developments. He said that they had absolutely exact intelligence that last October Viet Minh planned to make main offensive against Tonkin delta. Plan involved infiltration by 320th division of center of delta and then attacks in center and from north and south of delta. This plan was suddenly changed, he felt certain, because of Chinese Communist orders, but was in part due to fact that he, Navarre, had conducted "spoiling operation" making Viet Minh plans against Tonkin delta extremely difficult. Suddenly in October Viet Minh transferred attention and troops to operation against Laos. To counter that, Navarre had conducted parachute operation, occupying Dien Bien Phu, key to Thai country, the one section with large rice production, and crossroads of the various trails leading to Luang Prabang and Laos. He had confirmed intelligence that as late as January 25 Viet Minh planned attack Dien Bien Phu. Two or three days later they had abandoned idea provisionally. This due, he thought, to Viet Minh realization that Dien Bien Phu had been greatly strengthened by change in French defensive layout there and also because Viet Minh realized they had not enough munitions conduct sustained siege. Suddenly Viet Minh main division struck out for Luang Prabang. Although their forced marches were extraordinary—seven days normal marching in four days—French advantage of air transport enabled them to move more quickly still. When division arrived found Vientiane too strongly fortified and garrisoned to attack with single division, and on their flank at Muong Sai French had moved seven battalions. In these circumstances the Viet Minh obviously hesitating as to next step. They could not attack Luang Prabang with any chance of success; might attack Muong Sai, but place of no strategic value to them and they would suffer heavy losses if they did. They were beset by food and logistic problems. Had only about two months during which could conduct operations before the rains started. He felt rather certain that before long main Viet Minh forces would be recalled for another attack on Dien Bien Phu. Viet Minh making strenuous efforts increase stocks of munition and food at Dien Bien Phu. He hoped greatly that they would attack Dien Bien Phu because he felt certain of holding it and inflicting costly losses to Viet Minh there. If Viet Minh going attack Dien Bien Phu, would have to do it in next two months before rains started for would be impossible to feed and maintain their invading force of two or three divisions during rains.

Some, perhaps bulk, of Viet Minh would have to go back to their stations around Tonkin delta during this period.

In conclusion Navarre said he felt it was settled Chinese Communist policy for Viet Minh to infiltrate northern Laos, not necessarily by military operations, and lay foundations for Thai confederation. establish control of Thai peoples in Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, and establish basis or point of departure for eventual taking over of Burma—and Malaya.

HEATH

751G.5/2–2254 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET SAIGON, February 22, 1954—9 a. m.

1506. Eyes only Dulles and Smith and Wilson and Kyes and Rand[2] from Stassen. At Pleven's request, accompanied by Ambassador Heath, I had a two-hour conference with Pleven—and DeJean at Dalat this morning February 21.

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[1] This telegram was transmitted in two parts.

[2] William M. Rand, Deputy Director of the Foreign Operations Administration.

General Navarre and General Ely joined conference for the final half-hour.

Pleven has been in Indochina two weeks and intends to remain another week. There were a number of plus and minus factors disclosed and I would characterize the total as encouraging but requiring highest priority continuing attention and including some points of major danger to objectives.

Pleven emphasized that there must be no leak of what he told me as it would make more difficult his task.

The following is a summary of major points:

1. Upon Pleven's return to France he will report to the Cabinet and subsequently, either through a policy motion in the House during the first 10 days of March or through the consideration of the defense budget beginning the middle of March the issue of the Indochina war will be tested.

2. He will make a strong case. We reviewed the many factors involved. The difficulties of French public and parliamentary opinion will be very great. He referred to Naegelen's [3] recent adverse address on the subject. It will be necessary to exert extraordinary efforts of persuasion. A program of the way out over the next two years involving increased commitments and efforts of the Vietnamese Government, follow-through commitments of matériel and finance from the US Government, and a see-it-through policy of the French Government will be the trilateral essentials.

3. French casualties in recent weeks have been severe, in their view, including excessive casualties caused by a new plastic mine of Chinese make which cannot be detected by present methods and which the Viet Minh sow liberally in the immediate path of French Forces and French vehicles. General Trapnell will obtain samples for analysis by US technicians for countermeasures. Presume we may have Korean experience with the same mine. This is high priority.

4. The top Vietnam leadership is weak and Bao Dai failed to come up to the Hanoi Delta area for an agreed trip there with Pleven. Bao Dai has also broached an unsound mass evacuation plan from the delta area. But the new Vietnam Cabinet has a number of members with intelligence and spark and drive including the Minister of Defense and this is a real asset.

5. Pleven and the French here are now convinced that they can build a real Vietnam Army and their views on this have changed in the past six months from experience. The difficulties are still great but there is now a confidence that an effective fighting force of Vietnam can and will be built.

6. Navarre is completely confident of his position for the remainder of this fighting season in his principal installations including Dien Bien Phu and the delta and Luang Prabang. Dien Bien Phu is a veritable jungle Verdun which he hopes will be attacked as it will

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[3] Marcel-Edmond Naegelen, Socialist member of the French National Assembly.

result in terrific casualties to the Viet Minh and will not fall. His concentration now is on the French-Vietnam offensive to start in October.

7. In this respect Navarre and Pleven speak of long delays in essential US equipment. It would appear to me that US procedures have not been adapted to the fact of war and that the back-up of the war should be placed in CINC Far East who has on hand practically everything needed and could supply it promptly with subsequent payment by MDAP funds and subsequent replacement to his stocks from the States. The delays of requisitioning to Washington, or San Francisco, or Pearl when the equipment is all out here in the Japan, Okinawa, Korea area cannot be accepted for the offensive war contemplated by Navarre beginning in October.

8. The Vietnam Government needs further economic and technical assistance especially in the care of the displaced villagers and urgently in the case of those who desert or flee from the Viet Minh side of war who then need resettlement as a matter of top importance in the winning of the support of the people. I concur in this view and suggest that a fund of $7,000,000 for this purpose be transferred from general reserve and be placed at Director McReynolds' call for these purposes without detailed Washington advance approval of projects. The fact of war should also be recognized in FOA Washington and top priority on recruitments of necessary technicians for this new and inexperienced government should be given.

9. Navarre contemplates a change in his TO for greater mobility and fire power. He wants to increase the automatic arms of his battalions from 45 to 65. Long rifles are too slow and useless in the jungle where enemy fire opens up at 10 meters distance. His special request now is for light armor, amphibious light armor, light observation planes and a new request which he will soon make for more automatic arms are considered by Pleven to be of top importance.

10. They urgently wish to expand the counter-guerrilla effort and for these and other mobility purposes request early action on their helicopter requests and will want by September 1 an American ground crew of 80 to help initial maintenance and to train their technicians.

11. Washington statements at high level if first coordinated precisely with Paris which would express attitude of confidence in French and back-up of their requests for material, and would note the affection for France of millions of loyal Vietnamese would be helpful. Washington's statements can be harmful in Paris if the wrong things are said or the right things in the wrong way.

12. Pleven anticipates agreement on final negotiations on Vietnam independence to take place in Paris beginning early March and no serious obstacle to satisfactory completion.

13. Relations of France with Cambodia are improved and internal security in Cambodia is good with only 8,000 Viet Minh remaining in remote areas and the recent surrender of two bands of 1,000 each.

14. Pleven understands that qualification of subject to Congressional approval will apply to all Executive Branch commitments for future follow-through and this is not an obstacle as he has confidence in President Eisenhower's effective leadership.

15. He further explained that both time and political psychology made it impossible for him to return to Paris via Washington. He hoped I would report his discussion with a strong cautionary note against leaks to the press and that I would convey the background thoroughly on my return. My response was one of broad encouragement, pledge of prompt report to Washington, personal belief that essential action for expediting deliveries and for future follow-through in matériel and finance would be forthcoming, and confidence that his incisive informed leadership would carry this significant case in Paris and that the break-through to a clear victory next year was in the making with deep value for France and the free world.

My comment now to Washington is limited to these points:

1. There is no real danger in Indochina of major reverse during this fighting season.
2. Top priority is the political issue in March in Paris.
3. Second priority is getting our matériel back-up reorganized in the Far East to prepare for an offensive in October.
4. Third priority is expanded high caliber technical assistance to the new government of Vietnam particularly for those ministers who show spark and spirit and in mass methods of economic action which will win the Vietnam people.
5. All Washington statements on the Indochina war should be cleared in Paris especially between now and the parliamentary test.

. . . .

Ambassador Heath has read this message and may send supplementary reactions. General Trapnell has read the military portions and Director McReynolds the economic and technical portions.

HEATH

751G.00/2–2354 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, February 23, 1954—10 a. m.

1508. Repeated information Manila 138. Manila for Stassen. Governor Stassen's fine account of his conversations with Pleven and others (Embtel 1506, February 21 [*22*]) is essentially complete but Department may be interested in the following expansion of certain points which final paragraph Governor's message suggested I might make.

1. Regarding talk with Pleven, latter said that argument that Navarre will gain victory next year would not be effective with opposition because there have been too many promises of victory over past eight years. I thereupon asked him whether he thought that Navarre would be unable in year or 15 months from now to realize his plan of inflicting essential military defeat on Viet Minh armies. Pleven replied that he would not disagree with that possibility.

Pleven said the main argument of the opposition seeking termination of hostilities here would be the example of the Korean armistice. He said he was not criticizing our action in concluding an armistice in Korea where an entirely different situation and considerations prevailed, but the opposition's main argument would be "if the Americans can effect an armistice in Korea why can't we in Indochina?"

Another effective argument of the opposition would be found in the anticipated early conclusion of Franco-Vietnamese negotiations in Paris which would result in Vietnam gaining entire independence. The opposition would say France had protected the Associated States till now, but France had done its duty; now that the states are independent they should look after themselves.

The most effective trump the government could use in defending its policy of unabated military effort in Indochina would be for the Vietnamese officially and publicly to ask France to continue to protect them against the Viet Minh aggression. It would be hard for the opposition to reject a really clear national appeal from Vietnam for French military protection.

2. Our conversation with Bao Dai was very disappointing. Bao Dai, who in recent conversations with me had expressed hope that the "Navarre plan" and schedule would succeed, surprisingly stated that he had come to the conclusion that victory over the Viet Minh in the delta could not be obtained in less than three years and then only if the Vietnamese national army were expanded not by the "mere" 100,000 contemplated for the calendar year of 1954, but by some 300,000 men. In this situation he had been casting about for some means of shortening the war. The trouble was that while the Franco-Vietnamese forces might occupy roads and strategic locations in the Tonkin delta, the majority of the delta continued to furnish indispensable rice, recruits and replacements for the Viet Minh forces. The Viet Minh could not be driven militarily from the delta without massive bombardments which would be certain to destroy hordes of innocent peasants without assurance that the Viet Minh combatants would suffer particularly. A village under Viet Minh control could be completely destroyed by a bombardment and the inhabitants as well, but there was no certainty that Viet Minh soldiers or agents would even be there when the bombardment started. The Viet Minh strategy was to avoid larger-scale combats which they would lose because of superior French firepower. The only way to force them to battle would be to evacuate even up to as many as four million of the inhabitants of the Tonkin delta who, he insisted, would be glad to be evacuated if they knew they would be settled on land elsewhere. He argued that the three provinces taken in the "Atlante" operation of central Annam could receive up to three million refugees. (After this conversation

Nguyen De gave memorandum to Governor Stassen pointing out [garble] others high plateau region could accommodate three or four million Vietnamese farmers.)

Once this massive evacuation was effected in the Tonkin delta, Bao Dai argued, the Viet Minh would either have to fight or starve. China could not feed their forces and furthermore it is his opinion that they had to pay China for most of the help so far received.

We did not in the limits of a brief interview attempt to argue or expostulate in detail with Bao Dai about the manifest human, material, logistic and, I might add, moral unsoundness of such a massive evacuation. We made clear, however, that we were unreceptive. Puzzling over what induced Bao Dai to propose this manifestly unsound idea we both speculated that he fears the French will conclude an armistice with the Viet Minh on some parallel giving the latter the Tonkin delta, in which case Bao Dai would like to get the majority of the delta dwellers away from their control.

HEATH

396.1 GE/2-2354 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 23, 1954—6 p. m.

1517. Sent Hanoi 234, repeated information Phnom Penh, Vientiane unnumbered. We have endeavored to ascertain initial reactions in Vietnamese Government to communiqué from Berlin[1] announcing five-power conference on Korea and possibility of a later conference on settlement of war in Indochina. Opinions of Governors, Ministers range full width of spectrum from deep despair to qualified hope.

Minister of Information Le Thang, a Dai Viet from Tonkin, said that he felt once a conference began, it meant not only end of war, but end of Vietnam. He himself and others like him would be immediate target of Viet Minh reprisal, once they took over country following a cease-fire and national elections which would return a popular front government. Only future he saw for himself and his co-workers was to go down fighting.

Similar views were voiced by ex-Prime Minister Tam. He felt that negotiations would in effect amount to eventual political infiltration of this country and result would be loss of what we are now fighting for. However, as a politician long identified with the south, Tam said it might be possible to preserve Cochin China and set it up as an independent state. Presumably Tam had in mind some form of arrangement similar to Korean armistice whereby north and center Vietnam would be left to Viet Minh and south would retain its independence.

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[1] For the pertinent portion of the Final Communiqué of the Berlin Conference, Feb. 18, see p. 1057.

Quat, Minister of National Defense, insisted that at whatever conference might discuss peace in Indochina, it would be untenable if three Associated States were not represented as sovereign entities. (cf. memorandum January 27 by MacArthur reporting Secretary's conversation with Bidault on this point).

New Minister of Economic Affairs Ty [2] was only member of Cabinet with whom we have discussed conference who showed any signs of optimism. He said that people on both sides in this war, Vietnamese and Viet Minh, were heartily weary of eight years of internecine conflict. What everyone wanted was peace. He felt, therefore, that conference would find ready popular support on both sides of lines, but that if armistice and eventual peace were to be guaranteed by Communist China, majority of population in this peninsula would realize they were merely slated for eventual absorption behind an oriental iron curtain à la Czechoslovakia. However, if peace in Indochina were to be underwritten by the US entire population of peninsula whether presently dominated by Viet Minh or not, would with one accord welcome such a conclusion of hostilities. However, Ty warned that guaranties should be from US alone and not combined with any undertaking by French as this would be misconstrued as a veiled attempt to return to old colonial domination. Ty felt very strongly that if US could find its way clear to giving Vietnam a treaty on lines of US Korean defense agreement, it would suffice to bring all of Vietnam successfully out of war and on side of free world.

HEATH

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[2] Nguyen Van Ty.

751G.00/2–2454 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, February 24, 1954—3 p. m.

[Received 10:40 a. m.]

1525. Repeated information Paris 465, Hanoi 235. Re Deptel 1506, February 19 [*22*]. This morning saw Navarre who returned last night from inspection Central Vietnam. Navarre said that statement attributed to him in official account of interview (Embtel 1509, February 22) [1] was not a correct verbatim report. Some correspondent had stated in rather skeptical tone of voice that his impression was that Navarre would not be able to inflict decisive defeat on Viet Minh in 1955 and asked whether his impression was not correct. Navarre said he replied as quoted in our telegram that he expected in 1955 to be able to deprive Viet Minh of all areas vital to maintenance of their battle forces.

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[1] Telegram 1509 from Saigon, Feb. 23, not printed, commented on reports alleging that General Navarre had made remarks at a press conference to the effect that the war was stalemated. (751G.00/2–2354)

Navarre then went on to say that he still believed he would be able to "break the back" of large-scale Viet Minh military resistance year or 15 months from now but in reiterating that belief he reminded me that he had always attached certain "ifs" to realization of that belief. Most important proviso was that Vietnamese Ministry of Defense provide him with anticipated increase of Vietnamese battalions ready for serious combat operations. He had no real complaint to make of efforts of Vietnamese Defense Ministry or Vietnamese officers charged with training of Vietnamese forces. Given lackadaisical atmosphere and attitude toward war of Vietnamese administration and population, it is truly remarkable that Vietnamese officers have done as well as they have. Remedy must be found in a more determined and efficient Vietnamese political leadership and administration. If that were not forthcoming, he could not realize his schedule.

He said how could one expect a national war spirit when Bao Dai remained removed from his people, spending his days hunting. He had consistently urged Bao Dai to inspect Vietnamese military units either accompanied by him (General Navarre) or alone as he pleased. Twice he thought he had persuaded him, and in fact Bao Dai had agreed to make some military visits, only to call them off at last moment. Perhaps if there were somebody continuously posted with Bao Dai, he might prod latter to take active interest in his army. However, that was not his, Navarre's, job. If he had authority, he would be tempted to deliver ultimatum to Bao Dai to take up residence in Saigon within 15 days or relinquish his authority over army and administration.

Navarre said there was a second "if" to fulfillment of his plan on schedule. That was that Chinese Communist armament aid should not be stepped up to provide Viet Minh with same armament and firepower which Franco–Vietnamese forces now enjoy.

He pointed out that Vietnamese Government had been unable to assert authority over Hoahaos and Caodaist sects. These two sects had been able to induce considerable number of desertions and acts of indiscipline among Vietnamese units in south.

HEATH

751G.00/2-2454 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, February 24, 1954—7 p. m.
[Received 6:08 p. m.]

3053. Repeated information Saigon 335. Jacquet said last night government had agreed to Assembly discussion Socialist interpellation on Nehru proposal cease fire Indochina [1] in recognition fact that IC debate was inevitable for near future and better have it now than later. Interpellation discussion, which for all practical purposes constitutes debate, accordingly set for March 5 (Embtel 3038).[2]

Factors leading to government decision, according Jacquet, belief that preferable not hold debate too close to Geneva conference. Moreover, military news for moment relatively favorable and Pleven's return immediately preceding debate offers good opportunity strong government statement (probably to be delivered by Pleven himself). Fact that debate will coincide with negotiations with Vietnam might also prove useful in emphasizing to Vietnamese continuing difficulties of government in maintaining present policy of full prosecution of war while leaving door open to "honorable" negotiations.

Jacquet deplored Nehru statement in increasing government's difficulties. People and press will find it difficult understand why cease fire impossible although government will be obliged say so. Members Jacquet's cabinet believe statement plays Viet Minh hand so effectively they question whether it was inspired.

Jacquet professes have advance indication Pleven's report which will only become known after his arrival Paris and report to Prime Minister. Whatever it recommends will be of vital importance in future policies.

Jacquet did not dismiss possibility accuracy present Paris rumors that it will recommend review present policy formation native armies and question role Bao Dai. Certainly it will point out weaknesses Buu Loc Government.

Jacquet expressed great relief US decision not request change MAAG terms of reference on replacing Trapnell with O'Daniel. Any other decision would have led to insurmountable difficulties. To back up this allegation he read sections of telegram from Navarre asserting inadmissibility enlargement O'Daniel functions in most explicit terms and draft of telegram which was to be sent in reply stating that government would not budge on question (telegram was not sent because of action on Department's instruction contained Deptel 2910).[3]

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[1] Speaking before the Indian Parliament on Feb. 22, Prime Minister Nehru proposed a cease-fire in Indochina prior to the Geneva Conference. For the statement by the Prime Minister, see India, *Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, House of the People*, Part II, 6th sess., vol. I, No. 6, cols. 415-416.

[2] Telegram 3038 from Paris, Feb. 23, read as follows:

"Daniel Mayer (SFIO) proposed to Assembly this afternoon that hearing be granted to interpellation concerning Nehru suggestion for cease-fire in Indochina. Proposal backed by signatures 50 deputies. Without bringing matter to vote, government agreed on March 5, provided there is not general Indochina debate following Pleven's return March 3. This is first indication government expects and presumably accepts Indochina debate next week." (751G.00/2-2354)

Two things disturb Jacquet now. First, that public would misunderstand Nehru proposal as outlined above and secondly that hopes for Geneva would reach such height that descent following failure (as he anticipated) would lead to such public and parliamentary pressure that government would be obliged to accept catastrophic enemy terms. He cited as examples enemy occupation Tonkin or introduction Viet Minh Ministers Vietnamese Government, either of which would lead to eventual Communist control. He had been thinking of possibility Viet Minh would attempt negotiate directly at end of dry season and does not exclude it entirely.

Neither he nor government were worried about danger coming debate would present to government stability. Excluding Communists, no party would seek to overthrow or even unduly embarrass government on Indochina issue with Geneva on horizon. Trouble would come during or later.

In Jacquet's opinion slight, if any, chance EDC will follow on IC debate before Geneva. There is not time and opponents will inject obstacles in order ascertain results Geneva before facing EDC. This good thing for IC question will therefore be considered on own merits. (*Note:* Here Jacquet wearing his hat of Gaullist opponent to EDC rather than that of Minister Laniel's Government.)

ACHILLES

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[3] In telegram 2910 to Paris, Feb. 20, also sent to Saigon, Phnom Penh, and Vientiane, the Department of State indicated that Gen. John W. O'Daniel had been designated to be Chief of MAAG Indochina, with the rank of Major General, as a routine replacement for Maj. Gen. Thomas J. H. Trapnell. The appointment involved no change in the MAAG terms of reference. The Embassy at Paris was instructed to seek the approval of the French Government for the appointment. (711.5851G/2-2054) In telegram 3296 from Paris, Mar. 10, the Embassy reported that the approval of the French Government had been obtained. (711.5851G/3-1054)

751G.5622/2-2454 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET

SAIGON, February 24, 1954—5 p. m.
[Received 10:23 p. m.]

1537. Repeated information Paris 468. On receipt of Deptel 1476 (repeated information Paris 2861)[1] DCM called on General Lauzin,

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[1] In telegram 1476 to Saigon, Feb. 16, the Embassy was instructed to report as to whether the French still desired to employ civilian pilots. (751G.5622/2-1654)

Chief of French Air Force in Indochina, and General Gambiez, Navarre's chief of staff. It is apparent that French still desire employ civilian pilots but do not desire to pay for them.

Following interviews with Lauzin and Gambiez, CAT representative has had series of talks with French military who have repeatedly promised that contract would be signed almost any day and meanwhile he importuned MAAG to request FEAF for immediate delivery of twelve C–119's. However, when CAT representative refused to make crews available until contract was signed, French procrastinated and at last requested MAAG to ascertain if dollar funds could not be found through MDAP channels to finance contract at cost of approximately $100,000 per month for twelve crews.

Department will recall same reluctance to finance civilian crews with dollars was displayed by French last spring when six crews finally were contracted for. French, to whom we have given airplanes and utmost and immediate support, are attempting through procrastination to get US to foot bill for civilian crews which were so effectively trained by FEAF at their request. We see no reason for US to pick up this check and regret niggling attitude displayed by French authorities here and in Paris.[2]

HEATH

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[2] In telegram 1546 to Saigon, Feb. 26, the Department of State indicated that it also was opposed to the United States paying for civilian pilots hired by the French. (751G.5622/2–2454)

611.51G/2–2454

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (Morton)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 24, 1954.

When the Secretary met with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today to report on the Berlin Conference,[1] both Senator Gillette and Senator Humphrey [2] were extremely critical regarding our Indochina policy. Senator Gillette characterized it as illogical and unsound. Senator Humphrey said we had no plans for Indochina and that the testimony given by Admiral Radford, General Smith and Secretary Dulles was in his opinion conflicting and inconsistent.

I pass the foregoing information along simply as a matter of record so that the people in EUR and FE will know the kind of noise the two Senators are making with respect to Indochina. I should add that one or two other voices chimed in, particularly Mike Mansfield, to the effect that our policy with respect to Indochina was thus far sound and that there are a great many imponderables in Indochina, Paris, etc., which probably made it very difficult to forecast the future with exactitude.

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[1] For the testimony of the Secretary of State regarding the Berlin Conference, Feb. 24, 1954, see *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, vol. VI, pp. 153–184. For additional information on reports to Congress by Secretary Dulles on the Conference, see volume VII.

[2] Senators Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota and Guy M. Gillette of Iowa.

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR II

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Vietnam Correspondence"

The Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Ambassador at Saigon (Heath)

PERSONAL AND SECRET [WASHINGTON,] February 24, 1954.

DEAR DON: Before this reaches you you will have received a telegram from us regarding Turner Cameron's plans and you will have been able to fix an approximate date for Turner's taking over in Hanoi.[1] I am favorably impressed with Turner and believe he will do a very good job.

I hope in this connection that before Paul Sturm departs he will have the benefit of a long talk with you regarding the situation which confronts us over the next few weeks and will be able to handle his "debriefing" in Washington and elsewhere accordingly. I hasten to say that I would not hope or wish to induce Paul to be less than objective in his description of conditions in the area where he has served so brilliantly for the past two years. But I would wish him not to yield to the temptation of the fat boy in *The Pickwick Papers* when he aimed to make peoples flesh creep.

The major asset of our side in the coming weeks and particularly at the Geneva Conference is a conviction that with the Navarre plan the French Union has the capacity *and the will* to make decisive military progress during the next fighting season. Conversely, anything which is done to shake that conviction will help those who for different reasons desire or are convinced of the eventual failure of the Indochina enterprise. You and I know how precarious is the balance between the two views in Paris and elsewhere.

In other words, I look forward to seeing Paul return here after having received a liberal injection of your own robust faith in the future and warned against the harm which could be done through the undue highlighting of the more sensational and pessimistic aspects which undoubtedly form a part but only a part of the total picture with which we are confronted.

With warm regards,

Yours as always, PHILIP W. BONSAL

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[1] Cameron replaced Sturm as Consul at Hanoi on Mar. 18.

751G.5 MSP/2-2454

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Under Secretary of State (Smith)

SECRET SAIGON, February 24, 1954.

DEAR BEDELL: The question of General John O'Daniel's assignment to Saigon as Chief of MAAG has finally been settled. General Navarre has accepted his assignment here but on the clear understanding that he is to have no authoritative participation in the conduct of the war or in the training of the Vietnamese Army.

I personally am quite happy over "Iron Mike's" assignment here. I like him as an individual and admire him as a soldier, than which there is no finer word of praise. With the confidence which Admiral Radford and others place in him and his own very considerable powers of persuasion, he should be a fine advocate in Washington for the situation in Indochina, which is of such importance to our own national security.

Having said all this, however, I feel it is my duty to go on record as stating that General Navarre, while personally liking him, entertains a very low opinion of O'Daniel's understanding of the peculiar problems of this war and of his solutions for overcoming them. I must say that, on the basis of my own observation of him during his four visits to Indochina, I likewise do not value him as a military advisor for the strategic and tactical conduct of this particular war.

On his last visit here he left a memorandum with Navarre containing the suggestion that the Tonkin Delta be ringed with an increased number of concrete fortifications, the whole surrounded by a Maginot Line of barbed wire. I won't go into an analysis of this suggestion beyond saying that, given the near balance of forces between the two belligerents, such a solution would be not only impractical at present but derogatory to our aim to inflict decisive defeat on the Viet Minh as soon as possible. I know that Navarre regarded this suggestion as just plain ridiculous and I personally have heard "Iron Mike", who is always popping out with ideas, propose other "solutions" to the French that had little relevancy to the facts of this war.

So, if it is thought that "Iron Mike" is going to be an effective counselor, improver and "stiffener" of Navarre's conduct of this war, the chances are not too good. Because of Navarre's present opinion of him, General O'Daniel has two strikes against him for such a role. It may be that, living with this situation, "Iron Mike" will get a sounder appreciation of the characteristics of this war and cure himself of his previous habit of bouncing out with ill-considered "solutions", which at best are annoying to the French Commander-in-Chief. I hope so, but I feel impelled, with my knowledge of "Iron Mike's" aggressive personality and his tendency to be "set in his ways", to state that there is some danger that he may irritate rather than influence favorably General Navarre. We in the Embassy will do our best to avoid such development but I think you should be aware it may occur in spite of anything we can do.[1]

Sincerely yours, DON HEATH

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[1] In a letter to Heath of Mar. 12, Under Secretary Smith stated that he also had had misgivings regarding the appointment of General O'Daniel, but felt unable to make further representations with the Department of Defense. (751G.5 MSP/2-2454)

751G.00/2-2654 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 26, 1954—9 a. m.

1546. Repeated Paris 470, Hanoi 242. I called yesterday on Prime Minister Buu Loc, who leaves presently for Paris where negotiations with French Government to perfect Vietnamese independence open March 8.

Buu Loc said that, following four-power communiqué from Berlin on Geneva conference which opens April 26, his government had not yet made up its mind which course of action to take. He was fully conscious of possibility that, should Vietnam negotiate its complete independence before Geneva meeting, opposition sentiment in France for getting out of Indochina war quickly might crystallize with result that Vietnam might find itself fighting alone against not only Viet Minh, but, covertly, Communist China.

Buu Loc said it was at least illustrative of this problem, if not significant, that French Parliament was scheduled on March 5, only three days before his negotiations would commence, to debate Nehru's offer of good offices to arrange armistice talks with Ho Chi Minh.

As for Geneva conference itself, Prime Minister said that everything depended on what in fact would be agenda and who would deal with it. He said, for example, "if they are going to request Communist China to stop aiding Viet Minh, that is fine; but if they are going to negotiate an armistice with Ho Chi Minh, that is something quite different".

General impression which Prime Minister left with me was that as an experienced diplomat, he will not put his cards on table in Paris without definite assurances from French Government as to its intention to continue military aid to Vietnam and to treat as equal partners in preparing position for an eventual Geneva conference.

On local picture Prime Minister was optimistic. He said his trip to Tonkin had been heartening. He had visited practically every principal town in delta, had conversed with powerful Bishops of Bui Chu and Phat Diem, had met with undergraduates of University of Hanoi as an old alumnus, had addressed 4,500 trainees at their camp and could, on the basis of these personal contacts, avow that spirit in north was excellent.

Prime Minister said he had been much impressed by morale of militia in Tonkin, but that this was not in any way matched by equipment. I assured him that Embassy had recommended that Pentagon approve Navarre's request for rifles for militia use (Embtel 1402 repeated Paris 424, Hanoi 299).[1]

During Prime Minister's absence in Paris, government would be left in hands of Quat, able Defense Minister.

HEATH

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[1] Telegram 1402 from Saigon, Feb. 8, concerning arms for Vietnamese militia units, is not printed. (751G.5/2–854)

751J.00/2–2654 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, February 26, 1954—10 a. m.

1550. Repeated information Paris 472, Vientiane unnumbered. Prince Souvannaphouma, Prime Minister of Laos, called on me today. He said that his government was seriously concerned at Nehru's offer to arrange a cease fire on lines presently held by opposing forces, as if such an armistice were arranged, it would mean that three-quarters of Laos would be in Viet Minh hands. Nehru's suggestion seemed all the more mischievous and designed to help Communist cause because Ho Chi Minh had invaded foreign country and so-called Viet Minh Nationalists were now engaged in international aggression.

In this general vein Prime Minister felt that present invasion of Laos was purely political in objective and timed to coincide with Berlin Conference.

In general review of problems facing him, Souvannaphouma showed his usual courageous optimism, although he did not disguise fact that his little country is beset with difficulties. One of his immediate tasks is to secure agreement of French to a payment of Laotian conscripts at same rate as Laotian regulars. (French now assume cost of all military expenditures in Laos.) French thus far have taken line that conscripts owe their military service and should be paid a pittance. However, Souvannaphouma points out that to impose differing rates of pay in one army will be most deleterious to morale. On other military matters Prime Minister says he has secured Navarre's agreement to his proposals. Thus Navarre will undertake to increase equipment and staffing patterns of present light battalions to make them regular battalions. Likewise Navarre has agreed that after military situation of Luang Prabang has been clarified both Laotian and French Union Forces will be used in a general cleaning-up operation to sweep Bolovens Plateau which for some years has been permeated with Viet Minh infiltration.

Souvannaphouma thought that if these two military objectives could be realized Laos would in fact emerge from this campaigning season stronger than ever. Laotian army now totaled some 24,000 regular troops under arms, plus 50 companies of 125 men each of auxiliary forces.

Souvannaphouma was opposed to any break-up of present Associated States monetary and customs union, but pointed out that if Cambodia should refuse to continue in this association it would be difficult for Laos to remain alone in union with Vietnam as the greater economic superiority of latter country would place Laos in a most disadvantageous bargaining position. Prime Minister complained that Vietnam has not yet paid Laos its share of last year's customs receipts totaling some 230 million piasters, or approximately half of total national budget.

HEATH

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 186th Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, February 26, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at this meeting were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Acting Secretary of Defense; the Acting Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission; the Under Secretary of State; the U.S. Representative to the United Nations; the Secretary of the Army; Mr. Smith for the Secretary of the Navy; the Secretary of the Air Force; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force; Robert R. Bowie, Department of State; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Mr. Cutler and Mr. Jackson, Special Assistants to the President; the Deputy Assistant to the President; Bryce Harlow, Administrative Assistant to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Feb. 26.

Following is a summary of the report and discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

1. *Meeting of the four Foreign Ministers*[2]

Secretary Dulles indicated that he would not make his report in narrative form, even though this would be the most interesting way, but would single out those elements in the picture which would be of particular interest to the National Security Council.

. . . .

The single most difficult issue with regard to Asia was, of course, Indochina. The French felt that it was politically indispensable for them to secure some reference to the possibility of a truce. Most of the French can't or won't understand why they must persevere in their struggle against the Communists after we have achieved an armistice in Korea. Bidault, however, clearly understands the great difference between the conditions for an armistice in Korea and those in Indochina. He has no illusions on this subject at all, but he also knows that the Laniel Government will fall if he cannot make some kind of gesture.

Molotov himself had not put forward any proposal for negotiations on Indochina. Indeed, for a long time he refused even to refer specifically to Indochina, and chose to play "very hard to get" on this subject. He played the game very smart, and at the end it was Bidault who was trying to force Molotov to include a reference to Indochina. Molotov had finally suggested that the formula include reference to Indochina in parentheses. When Bidault complained that it would be no use to take Indochina back to Paris in a parenthesis, Molotov finally agreed to remove the parentheses. Secretary Dulles had made an earnest effort to include in the terms of reference for the discussion of Indochina, conditions relating to the good behaviour and decent intentions of the Chinese Communists prior to the meeting. These statements were acceptable enough to Bidault, but Eden became a problem. He did not wish to have the resolution contain any language which appeared to impugn the good faith of the Chinese Communist Government. In the end, the language with respect to Chinese behaviour was omitted from the resolution, although the condition can be read implicitly in the language if not explicitly. Secretary Dulles said he believed it to be apparent that if Bidault had not gone back to Paris with something to show on Indochina, the Laniel Government would have fallen at once and would have been replaced by a government which would not only have a mandate to end the war in Indochina on any terms, but also to oppose French ratification of EDC. In general, said Secretary Dulles, the French are divided into two main categories—those who are prepared to write off Indochina but want France to join EDC, and those who wish to have France remain in Indochina, more or less as a colonial power, and are opposed to EDC. Furthermore, Secretary Dulles couldn't see the makings of a French government which would replace Laniel and continue the fight in Indochina. Accordingly, if we had vetoed the resolution regarding Indochina, it would have probably cost us French membership in EDC as well as Indochina itself. Our present position, therefore, at least offers the fair probability of salvaging both French membership in EDC and the continuation of the struggle in Indochina.

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[2] For the full record of the report made by Secretary Dulles at this meeting, see volume VII.

There had been no agreement, said Secretary Dulles, on the exact composition and form of the discussion on Indochina at the Geneva conference. It was his guess that we would encounter difficulties in this matter every bit as bad as those we have experienced in the past with regard to the composition of a conference to settle the Korean problem. For example, the French desire to keep out the representatives of the Associated States, lest their presence at Geneva also bring in Ho Chi Minh. Accordingly, both Bidault and Secretary Dulles are approaching the forthcoming Geneva conference with considerable equanimity. Secretary Dulles didn't believe that the French would push too hard for a negotiated settlement provided there was no real military disaster in Indochina prior to and during the conference. Moreover, the heat would be off when the fighting season ended in May. If the present French Government can hold on, and there was no serious military reverse or apparent military reverse, Secretary Dulles did not anticipate too much difficulty.

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751G.00/2-2654 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, February 26, 1954—5:29 p. m.

1548. Limit distribution. Saigon's 1450 repeated Paris 445.[2] Reftel most helpful. Department concurs regarding alarmist interpretation here recent military operations but believes balance has now been restored. Press releases following appearance Acting Secretary and Admiral Radford before Senate and House committees Feb 16 and 18 useful this connection. Realistic appraisal of military situation with resulting confidence in ability Navarre and Franco-Vietnamese forces deliver decisive blows to regular enemy forces in course next fighting season obviously major asset both in field and at conference table. To extent well founded convictions this direction are shared by French public opinion and by military and political leaders we can view future with more confidence. Department agrees generally your analysis over-all situation and also that we must work with French through existing channels. We cannot envisage French acceptance under present circumstances of any overt enlargement terms of reference within which our assistance being furnished.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Repeated to Paris as telegram 2959.

[2] Dated Feb. 15, p. 1046.

With reference FOA mission, would appreciate your views whether time ripe for French and ourselves exchange views regarding contributions to be made by French and US to reconstruction and conditions under which those contributions would be made. Would assurance such support strengthen present Vietnamese determination end struggle only under conditions where Franco–US cooperation would be assured to a Vietnam definitely remaining within free world orbit.

Delighted learn of psychological warfare activities under Hellyer's direction.

Most impressed with possibilities "unconventional warfare." Inclined belief our help here could be expanded and accelerated and would appreciate your judgment whether renewed approach in Paris would be desirable. Also to what extent do you believe French High Command would consent to direct relationship in this matter with Vietnamese authorities? Thought that there may be some results achievable through such a relationship which French could not attain needs exploring. Department believes that if anything is to be done in this field, it should be done soon.

Would also appreciate your views whether establishment direct relationship at MAAG level with military authorities Vietnam would be desirable or feasible at this time. Matter has been discussed from time to time. Has moment of action arrived? It seems to us direct identification US support with local government without passing through French might produce political assets although we are aware possible drawbacks.

Above has not been discussed other agencies here. Desire your views in order develop departmental position in continuing discussions such other agencies.

DULLES

751G.11/2-2654 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, February 26, 1954—6:47 p. m.

1552. Concern is mounting here at Bao Dai's continued failure to take active role in leadership his embattled people. Department fully appreciates efforts which have been made by you and by French to remedy situation which remains one of serious weaknesses our side in struggle.

While Department assumes Bao Dai's attitude due in part his concept traditional imperial role and in part his analysis politico-military situation and prospects, state of his health may also be contributing factor. Department understands he suffers from chronic malaria and liver condition which while not sufficiently debilitating to restrict his sporting and social activities, may leave him with insufficient energies meet adequately the politico-military challenge inherent in his exalted station. Department is further aware Bao Dai's earnest efforts secure best possible medical treatment both in Vietnam and in France. Unfortunately however it appears that treatment has been to date unsuccessful.

In your discretion you are authorized discuss with Bao Dai state of his health. If suitable opportunity presents itself, you may ask him whether he has ever considered possibility seeking treatment here where medical science has made such striking progress in treatment tropical diseases. If Bao Dai appears interested you may offer investigate possibility arranging for him to visit US unofficially for medical treatment, assuring him that facilities including transportation to US could be made available. In event of a positive expression of interest from Bao Dai, French (DeJean) should be immediately informed and given opportunity make any observations they may desire before any definite commitment is made to Bao Dai. Department assumes in any case Bao Dai would not wish to leave Vietnam until end current fighting season.[2]

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Repeated for information to Paris as telegram 2968.

[2] In a letter of Mar. 1 to Ambassador Heath, Bonsal stated the following:

"The telegram which you recently received about medical treatment for Bao Dai reflected the views of Admiral Radford and General Smith on this subject. We want to be very careful to avoid being put in a position which will embarrass or trouble our French friends." (PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Vietnam Correspondence")

In telegram 1579 from Saigon, Mar. 3, Chargé McClintock expressed the following opinion: "I do not think that even American doctors will be able to change His Majesty's character." (751G.11/3-354)

PSA files, lot 58 D 207, "Vietnam Correspondence"

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal)

[Extract]

TOP SECRET SAIGON, February 26, 1954.

DEAR PHIL: We were exceedingly grateful for the most helpful fill-in on the somewhat turgid situation in Washington which you provided in your letter of February 12. We had, as you no doubt surmised from our recent telegrams, come by a process of deduction in the dark to the same conclusion that, despite all the good will in the world, there was much doubt and soul-searching in high quarters at home as to *a*) what is wrong with the Indochina situation, and *b*) what to do about it.

I must say on reading the news magazines and the papers, I am still puzzled as to the degree of gloom which seems to have settled on everyone at home as to the military posture here. Actually in the tactical sense Navarre and Giap have been playing chess with each other. For the life of me, I cannot see why we should be wringing our hands if we consider the fact that Navarre, in his mauling of the 320th division and his later lightning seizure of Dien Bien Phu, completely frustrated the Vietminh's plans for what might have been a very costly uprising in the Delta. Subsequent developments, such as the thrust to the Mekong and the descent toward Luang Prabang, have successfully been checkmated by Navarre, while to his credit is the Operation Atlante on the coast north of Nhatrang. Navarre has had the courage to continue the pursuit of his strategic plan, and on overall balance, he is in a better strategic position with a greater measure of military strength than he was six months ago. At the same time, the Vietminh are not increasing the size of their armed forces because they have reached the limit of the man power pool upon which they can draw, and even though the Chinese have stepped up deliveries of equipment and supplies, their support in this regard is by no means comparable to the massive supply line which comes from the United States and France.

. . . .

DONALD R. HEATH

751G.00/2–2754: Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, February 27, 1954—2 p. m.

3100. Repeated information Saigon 342. We are beginning to hear in political and parliamentary circles speculation that Ho Chi Minh might become Asiatic Tito.[1] Factors cited are Viet hatred of Chinese, Ho's alleged refusal to accept more Chinese supplies than he could pay for and allegations that, like Tito, his strength depends upon indigenous rather than Russian forces. We are not in position to evaluate such thinking but it obviously contains strong element of wishfulness. Same applies to renewed speculation about Mao[2] as possible Tito.[3]

ACHILLES

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[1] Marshal Tito (Josip Broz), Premier of Yugoslavia; Secretary General of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

[2] Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

[3] Telegram 1578 from Saigon, Mar. 2, read as follows: "Report set out Paris telegram 3100, repeated information Saigon 342, is completely 'made in France.' We have not discerned any evidence here that Ho Chi Minh might become an Asiatic Tito, nor have recent rallies from Viet Minh Zone indicated that any such prospect is in store.

"Probable origin of this speculation is desire of French to rationalize appearance of Ho Chi Minh, or his representative at Geneva Conference and to endow conversations with them with an ersatz aura of respectability." (751G.00/3-254)

751G.00/2-2854 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, February 28, 1954—3 p. m.

1567. Repeated information Paris 473. In past two days I have talked with Bao Dai, French State Secretary for War De Chevigne, and Defense Minister Pleven.

1. I found Bao Dai in much more hopeful mood than during his talk with Stassen and me (see Embtel 1506, February 21 [*22*]). Referring to idea he launched at last interview of massive evacuations Tonkin Delta, Bao Dai said he realized it would be logistically difficult to point of impossibility, although it was very practical in other respects and would have effective military results. One reason he had proposed it was his fear that sooner or later Chinese would intervene and invade Tonkin. He was not going to leave "his" people there under Chinese yoke.

2. Real enemy was Communist China. He had no doubts that if there were no Chinese intervention, Franco-Vietnamese forces would overcome Viet Minh. He feared that Chiang Kai Shek was no longer a leader who could drive communism out of China, but offered no alternative candidate.

3. He said he was unalterably opposed to idea of any armistice with Ho Chi Minh and he asserted that, even if French withdrew their forces, troops and officers of Vietnamese national army would reject any suggestion of armistice and fight on against Viet Minh.

4. He had been deeply impressed by Pleven whom he considered a great man. He had told Pleven that he had not asked for new agreements with France to complete Vietnamese independence at this stage. It was France alone which raised issue by its July 3 declaration. Since issue had been raised, he had detailed to Pleven requests which Viet-

nam would make at forthcoming conference. He had urged Pleven in French interest not to let concessions to these requests be wrung from France through negotiations but that France should take initiative and offer concessions without being asked to do so. Pleven had replied that he thought well of this idea but would have to take it up with his government on his return to Paris. Bao Dai then said to me he had asked Pleven what France wanted in return. He had posed this question to Pleven with some fear that latter would reply requesting immoderate privileges for France and restrictions which would not go down with Vietnamese nationalists. But Pleven had simply said in reply that all France wanted was a "strong Vietnam."

5. Bao Dai in praising Pleven made clear his poor opinion of Jacquet. He said he had told Jacquet to his face that he was reactionary. Bao Dai was also perturbed over French "colonialist" officials and supports in Paris who were intriguing in general against a new deal for Vietnam and in particular for removal of De Jean. Latter event would be a calamity since De Jean of all French officials sent here had highest and clearest view of future Franco-Vietnamese relations.

6. Bao Dai then spoke enthusiastically of Buu Loc's reliability and performance to date as Prime Minister. He said that I could speak with complete frankness and trust to Buu Loc. If we had something to complain of in operation of government to say so frankly. If we had suggestions they would be well received.

7. Finally Bao Dai said that he thoroughly realized now that not only was Vietnam deeply indebted to [*for*] material aid to France and US but that Vietnam owed a moral debt to these countries and indeed to whole free world and had moral mission to fulfill. War was not just war against rebels but war for freedom.

Comment: In private conversation Bao Dai does not usually indulge in lofty moral and idealistic sentiments. He usually speaks in terms of down-to-earth realism. His remarks were only words but they were a welcome change in attitude if only a verbal one. I was tempted to reply to these lofty phrases by saying that Bao Dai should live up to them by coming out of woods and exerting really national leadership but decided that approach should be reserved for a later occasion.

Immediately after my return from Dalat I saw De Chevigne.

1. De Chevigne insisted at length on opposition in France to continuation of military effort. Only argument against this feeling would be a convincing, detailed program and timetable whereby both Vietnam National Army and government and people would dynamically engage in war. De Chevigne called this a "Vietnamization" of war. If that failed to occur, there would be no other alternative than "internationalization" of war under UN and that was an uncertain and not really desirable solution.

2. Present military situation was not bad and French forces were fighting with determination and skill. But morale could not be maintained unless Vietnam National Army and government made really determined and successful effort. Could not expect even professional soldiers to fight with efficiency in cause in which they saw no national

interest and no evidence of national determination on part of country they were defending. Bao Dai must be made to visit and live with his Vietnamese troops.

3. De Chevigne expressed disbelief in Navarre plan or in substantial victory for Franco-Vietnamese forces during 1954–55 campaign season. I took decided issue with this and said that General Trapnell and I were convinced that, given quantitative and qualitative improvement of Vietnam Army, back of Viet Minh military resistance could be broken during that period, although guerrilla war might last for a much longer period. I added that we had confidence in Navarre and in his plan.

4. De Chevigne said that military situation was by no means unsatisfactory but could change adversely overnight if suddenly some MIGs appeared over Dien Bien Phu, which in such event could not be held. I said if MIGs did appear, in my personal opinion, it would constitute direct Chinese intervention since there are no Viet Minh Air Force or usable airfields in Viet Minh territory.

5. In conclusion, De Chevigne praised great tact which American political and military representation here had exercised in execution of American aid programs. He had talked to innumerable French military authorities here and found them unanimous in their appreciation of the aid and the manner in which it was extended. Necessary end-use inspections had been accomplished thoroughly but in a most tactful manner. He hoped that General O'Daniel who would succeed General Trapnell would show same tactful understanding of this situation.

I had a rather long talk with Pleven later yesterday.

1. Pleven said he had no idea in what mood he would find French Government on his return but feared to find there and in Parliament a desire to terminate French military effort in Indochina. Only way to overcome that opposition would be for Vietnamese (as De Chevigne had proposed) to come through with a convincing program and timetable of governmental and military performance. Something had to be done to get Bao Dai to exert some leadership and also to prevent Imperial Cabinet from meddling when government was endeavoring to do a necessary job. He had been shocked to hear from Dr. Nghiep,[1] the excellent Public Health Minister, that he had withdrawn doctors of his medical team he had sent to provinces occupied by Atlante operation because pacification region had been entrusted by Bao Dai to Giao[2] whose Public Health Director was utterly incompetent. Nghiep has asked Buu Loc to remove Giao's Health Director but latter replied he could not do so because of Imperial Cabinet. I remarked that I personally thought Giao, although he had certain virtues, should be removed himself and that I would discuss matter with Nghiep and, if De Jean thought well, would talk to Buu Loc and Bao Dai himself about this failure of Giao. I told Pleven that Bao Dai had expressed greatest esteem for him (and also of De Jean) and that if anyone could effectively sermonize Bao Dai he perhaps was the man. Pleven said that was not his job. I replied I thought that as Defense Minister

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[1] Tan Ham Nghiep.

[2] Pham Van Giao, Governor of Central Vietnam.

it was his job. Bao Dai would listen to him. I thought he could call on our government to do anything it could in seconding French efforts in bringing about some dynamism in Vietnamese military picture. I remarked I told De Jean once that, if there were some unpleasant home truths which for reasons of maintaining harmonious relations French themselves did not want to convey to Bao Dai or his government, I would be glad to take lead.

2. Pleven then said that even if he could obtain convincing assurances of better Vietnamese governmental and military effort here, unless he had some fairly precise assurances of what would be American reaction to sudden appearance of a "Viet Minh Air Force," he could hardly, in conscience, plead for prolongation or increase of French military effort in Indochina. Although such planes would bear Viet Minh markings, they would in effect be a Chinese Communist Air Force. This contingency had never been, so far as he knew, subject of discussion between France and US. If American Government would regard such an occurrence as Chinese Communist belligerent intervention in this war and was prepared to undertake some counteraction, a precise warning should be given to Communist China at an appropriate moment, which would be forthcoming conference at Geneva. In making this suggestion, he was speaking personally as he had not discussed it with his government, but he intended to ask General Ely on his forthcoming visit to US to explore this matter thoroughly.

HEATH

651.51G/3–154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, March 1, 1954—10 p. m.

1573. Repeated information Paris 476, Hanoi 248. I talked with De Jean today who leaves March 4 for Paris where he will be present during Franco-Vietnamese negotiations. He expects be absent 15 days.

1. De Jean said he was extremely pleased with Pleven's visit which had made an excellent impression on Vietnamese. Pleven, he said, had arrived here with impression that military situation was rather hopeless but had changed his mind on that point. Pleven had been very critical of Vietnamese governmental performance but had been rather agreeably surprised with progress made in Vietnam National Army, although there was still much room for improvement in latter. De Jean said he had made clear to Pleven that Vietnamese were unused to government and one should not expect them to blossom immediately forth with determined, efficient administration. De Jean had told Pleven that present government was certainly best that Vietnam had enjoyed during its five years of independence. Majority of ministers were young, intelligent, and honest. But government had been in office only two months and could not be expected to change administrative picture overnight. He disagreed with Pleven and De Chevigne who thought "screws might be put on Vietnamese Government" and that it would be possible to insist as condition of continuing French sup-

port that Vietnam subscribe to a rigid timetable of administrative and military improvement. As for military side they had already agreed upon program of expansion of Vietnam National Army. On governmental side more could be obtained by suggestion, encouragement, and help than by "putting screws on".

2. De Jean said he was still confident that year or 15 months from now Navarre could gain victories over Viet Minh substantial to point of being decisive subject, however, to proviso that Chinese Communist assistance to Viet Minh does not match increased American and French aid. Of course, appearance of Chinese aircraft, however, marked as being Viet Minh would completely alter this situation, but he did not think it was likely that Chinese would undertake this step under present circumstances.

On other hand, Chinese Communist aid was certainly increasing. French intelligence was that from a branch of Kunming railroad, roads were being constructed on both sides of frontier via Laichau to Viet Minh forces investing Dien Bien Phu. At some points along this route rivers were used for reshipment. There was no doubt that, as has been frequently rumored before, Viet Minh forces at Dien Bien Phu now had 37 mm. anti-aircraft guns which would greatly increase difficulties of maintaining Franco-Vietnamese garrison there, which required airlift or airdrop of 80 tons a day. Nevertheless French were confident that Dien Bien Phu can be held.

HEATH

751G.00/3–254 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, March 2, 1954—noon.

469. Repeated information Saigon 363, Paris 194. Paris limit distribution. General Cogny said yesterday that Viet Minh threat to Luang Prabang and Muong-Sai has disappeared and that he is now recovering some of the parachute battalions which he lost to operations in Laos. This movement, which began February 28, will tie up civil air transport in Indochina through March 4.

Cogny said that Viet Minh division 308 has definitely withdrawn toward Dien-Bien-Phu. Enemy intentions with regard to latter strongpoint are still not clear, but Cogny believes that since Viet Minh continue to move munitions into area, they may yet launch major attack against it.

Within delta, conditions have been relatively calm past two weeks. Viet Minh division 320 continues exert pressure against southwest delta, although not all its units have infiltrated. One battalion of regiment 48 was caught north of Phu-Ly two days ago and heavily punished. Mine warfare, long serious, is coming to assume even more dangerous proportions and spreading into areas, such as Sontay, which had been generally free of it. (Cogny's Cabinet chief says that during past six months 80% of officer losses this command have been attributable to mines.)

While little of spectacular nature has occurred in delta since onset of operations in Laos, Cogny continued, there has been gradual loss of ground and initiative which it will take considerable time to make good. From point of view of French domestic politics, however, it is vital that end of spring campaign find France-Vietnamese forces in comparatively favorable position, and to enhance French position at Geneva conference, it is desirable that some major coup be executed before April 26. Whether this coup take the form of major clean-up operations within delta or of large-scale raids outside, it is indispensable that lost initiative be demonstrably regained, even though time is short.

Cogny said Viet Minh have recently formed new independent regiment (254, at present outside delta and southwest of Phu-Ly) in manner he thinks should be adopted for formation of National Army units:

> Regiment is constructed around core of one good regular battalion, to which were added regional elements already experienced in local military activities. He reiterated his strong endorsement of proposal to provide militia with effective weapons, as part of a progressive program to put guns in the hands of all those on this side ready and competent to use them. Viet Minh have adopted sensible procedure of building their pyramid from the base upwards, whereas on this side the base has been neglected in favor of the apex.

At Cogny's request, General Navarre intervened to cause suspension of order issued from Dalat to Governor Tri to send 3,000 National Guardsmen to aid in defense of mountain plateaux (Contel 453).[2] Navarre asked that execution of this order be "delayed" two or three months, realizing situation may so far have evolved by that time as to render plan obsolete. Cogny does not know with whom this idea originated, but he is tempted to see in it evidence of a scheme to move troops south against an eventual hypothetical division of country at sixteenth parallel. Latter notion, which he says makes him "see red" both literally and figuratively, represents most efficient way he can conceive of losing war and all of Indochina.

As for plan of National Army General Staff to incorporate National Guardsmen into Army, that too had been taken under advisement and it will be effected, if it is effected, only over a period of time.

STURM

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[2] Telegram 453 from Hanoi, Feb. 24, is not printed. (751G.00/2–2454)

751G.11/3–254 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, March 2, 1954—8 p. m.

3151. Repeated information Saigon 348. Embassy wishes point out to Department that if plan to bring Bao Dai to United States (Department's 1552 to Saigon, repeated Paris 2968) [1] is carried out it will involve unfavorable and potentially harmful repercussions in France.

As previously reported, specter of United States in role of Pied Piper in Indochina is anathema to virtually all political groups and individuals most closely concerned with Indochina in France. While it is generally and gratefully recognized that United States aid has made it possible for French to continue their efforts in Associated States and without it the growing sentiment for negotiation or even withdrawal could probably not be restrained, there is sharp line drawn between what is considered as aid and what could be interpreted as interference. While accepting aid gratefully and admitting dominating influence it has in formation policy, French insist that reins be held in their own hands and any strong indication that direction is threatened would, we are convinced, foster attitude of "if United States wants to run the show let us hand it over to them lock, stock and barrel".

This reaction was most recently evident in O'Daniel incident. At that time we were read extracts by Jacquet of Navarre's cables to him on O'Daniel question and what we heard reinforced our impression that if matter had been pushed it would have constituted to French mutation from "aid" to "direction", and would have brought on a general review here which might have led to the very thing we seek to avoid.

French have always held doubts about Bao Dai and they are no less prevalent now than before. Rumors circulating this week on nature of Pleven's report which will be delivered to Prime Minister, Assembly Commissions and possibly the Assembly itself within the week include allegation it will recommend review of whole "Bao Dai experiment".

If it were announced now that Bao Dai was to go to the United States this would add considerable encouragement to opponents of present government's policy of carrying on the fight in hopes of improving prospects of negotiation, if not of victory itself. We cannot envisage that anything could result from Bao Dai's being subjected to United States influence on the spot which would be productive enough to counteract ill effects such a plan would have here.

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[1] Dated Feb. 26, p. 1083.

We are inclined share view of most Frenchmen here who have been closely associated with Bao Dai that he is as he is and it is useless to attempt make him over in a mould of our own creation. We know of no one here who seriously considers it likely that he will take more active role in leadership of his people. Rather, do they think he would welcome excuse to chuck whole affaire and retire to Switzerland "or the United States" to live on his considerable fortune.

As Department is aware, Bao Dai now plans come to France next week to be present during Franco-Vietnamese negotiations. His presence here will not be questioned unfavorably; on contrary, it might help in furthering the success of negotiations. On other hand, his absence in Dalat hunting would give the opposition reason to ask why, if he is indeed Chief of State, he is not here leading his country's delegation at such vital time. If he were neither here nor in Vietnam but rather in United States, the fire would really rage.[2]

ACHILLES

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[2] In telegram 1621 from Saigon, Mar. 8, Ambassador Heath stated the following: "I find the arguments put forth in Paris telegram 3151 to Department March 2 are compelling and believe that we should not ask Bao Dai to make trip to the United States for medical examination and treatment as suggested Department telegram 1552." (751G.11/3–854) Telegram 1628 to Saigon, Mar. 8, also sent to Paris as telegram 3074, read as follows: "In view comments contained Paris tel 3151 rptd Saigon 348 and Saigon's 1579 rptd Paris 481 and in view your recommendation Department agrees that project of bringing Bao Dai to US for health reasons may be shelved for present." (751G.11/3–354)

751G.00/3–354 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, March 3, 1954—8 p. m.

3171. Repeated information Saigon 350. Limit distribution. Maurice Schumann states that in Cabinet this morning Pleven spoke in only general terms of military situation in Indochina although he would discuss it more fully prior to his appearance before national defense committee. Although relatively optimistic on military situation, Pleven had stated anything approaching satisfactory military solution could not be expected within three years which had been blow to Cabinet. He had stressed adverse effect on morale of fighting forces of rumors of possible negotiations with Ho but had said on other hand that prospects of big power negotiations, such as Geneva, had beneficial effect.

ACHILLES

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 187th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 4, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

The following were present at the 187th NSC meeting: The President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Acting Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; Mr. Morrison for the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission; the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Robert R. Bowie, Department of State; Commissioner Campbell, AEC; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Mr. Cutler and Mr. Jackson, Special Assistants to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

. . . .

With regard to Indochina, Governor Stassen said that he returned with a strong feeling that the military situation in that area was a great deal better than we had imagined.[2] Indeed, he had found the French actually hoping for a major enemy attack because they were so confident that they could crush it. Of course, it was extremely unfortunate that in the present kind of warfare so many French officers and non-coms were being killed, particularly by the savage mine warfare. He believed that the United States had available shoes which would prevent the maiming of soldiers as a result of the explosion of plastic mines which could not be detected.

Governor Stassen said that General Navarre continued to look forward to the opening of his big offensive on October 1. He did not feel, however, that he had on hand as yet all the supplies he needed to mount this offensive. These supplies would have to be on hand by August 1, and Governor Stassen felt that the United States had most of the needed items in supply in Japan and Okinawa. Accordingly, our logistical back-up of the Navarre offensive should be based on

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Mar. 5.

[2] Harold E. Stassen, Director of the Foreign Operations Administration, delivered these remarks in the context of an overall report on his recent trip to Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Japan and Okinawa rather than on the round-about line from the United States itself.

Governor Stassen also found a need for a more adequate French military government organization to move in and accomplish the pacification of areas taken away from the enemy in the fighting.

Most significant of all, said Governor Stassen, was the recent conviction of the French that it was really possible to create an effective fighting force out of the Vietnamese natives. The French had now come to believe that their early failures to achieve this objective were chiefly to be explained by the premature use of the native battalions, and they were now being provided with more thorough training.

With respect to U.S. personnel, both military and civilian, Governor Stassen recommended that no individual stay longer there than a period of two years. This was a front line operation.

Of the Emperor Bao Dai, Governor Stassen said he received a very poor impression of an individual who was weak physically and lacking in courage. Nevertheless, his new government contained some very promising officials. Moreover, Governor Stassen thought highly of the King of Cambodia, and believed the situation in that state very hopeful.

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6. *Proposed ROK offer of troops to Laos* (NSC Action No. 1043–*a*; Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated March 2, 1954) [8]

Mr. Cutler called attention to the three studies of this problem which were attached to the Planning Board's recommendation that the offer of a Korean division to Laos be rejected. While the Planning Board was in unanimous agreement that General Hull should be instructed to tell President Rhee that the United States felt that this offer should not be made, Mr. Cutler pointed out the difference in opinion between the Departments of State and Defense with regard to the basis on which this opinion was to rest. The State Department believed that General Hull should explain this decision as motivated by "military considerations", whereas the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that it should be based upon "the best interests of the free world".

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[8] For NSC Action No. 1043, see the memorandum of discussion at the 185th Meeting of the National Security Council, Feb. 17, p. 1054. The memorandum of Mar. 2, not printed, by Executive Secretary Lay to the National Security Council, transmitted three studies on the proposed offer of the Republic of Korea of troops for Laos: a study on political implications, by the Department of State; a report on military aspects by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mar. 1, concurred in by the Acting Secretary of Defense (for text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 259–263); and a memorandum from the Director of Central Intelligence assessing probable reactions to Korean participation in the Indochina war. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 148, "ROK Offer")

The President said, with great emphasis, that he thought the basis should be that public opinion in the United States would never support the removal of an ROK division for adventures in other parts of the world while the United States itself was still obliged to maintain forces in Korea. He would certainly hate to have to explain such a situation to the mothers of American soldiers.

Secretary Smith said that this was precisely what the State Department had in mind when it spoke of rejecting the offer for military reasons.

The President then asked Admiral Radford for his views. Admiral Radford replied that he had felt that military reasons offered the soundest basis on which to reject Rhee's offer, but that the Chiefs of Staff had out-voted him on the issue. He therefore proposed that the Joint Chiefs should send General Hull a message indicating that he was to frame a rejection, in talking with President Rhee, on military grounds, and then to add what the President had said as to the impossibility of public acceptance of this move in the United States.

The President replied that he did not think the basis he had in mind should be described as "military reasons", but simply as domestic political reasons. In any case, he wanted General Hull to make quite clear to President Rhee that domestic opinion in the United States would never stand for the removal of a Korean division to Indochina.

In that case, Admiral Radford said, it was necessary to say nothing more than this in the JCS instructions to General Hull.

The Vice President commented that the best way of handling Rhee, in his opinion, was simply to tell him the truth.

The National Security Council:[4]

a. Discussed the subject on the basis of the recommendation contained in paragraph 4 of the reference memorandum.[5]

b. Agreed that the Department of Defense should transmit a message to General Hull directing him to advise the ROK Government that, after full consideration at the highest levels in the United States Government which commends the ROK Government for its determination to combat communist aggression in Asia even outside the borders of Korea, it is considered that it is not desirable at this time that a division of the Korean Army be sent to Laos because U.S. public opinion would not support the maintenance of U.S. forces in Korea while ROK forces were withdrawn from Korea for action elsewhere.

Note: The action in *b* above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense for implementation.

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[4] Points *a* and *b* below constituted NSC Action No. 1054, Mar. 4. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

[5] Paragraph 4 of the memorandum of Mar. 2 from the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council contained the recommendation that the Korean Government be advised that the United States did not consider it desirable that a Korean division be sent to Laos. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 148, "ROK Offer")

751G.00/3–554 : Telegram

The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, March 5, 1954—4 p. m.

3205. Repeated information Saigon 358. Limit distribution. In conversation with Senators Bridges and Symington[1] yesterday, Pleven stated he returned from IC more optimistic than when he left on military situation but more pessimistic on political picture. Present fighting season should end without significant advantage to either side but next year should bring major improvement if American aid continued, if there were no significant increase in Chinese aid and if Vietnamese army developed as planned. Nevertheless, he considered problems "endless" and saw no prospect of complete military victory and some danger of wars spreading. On political front France was giving full independence but as elsewhere in East indigenous leadership and administrative ability was sadly lacking. Bao Dai was highly intelligent but in no way a dynamic or forceful leader. Inability of political authorities to hold areas liberated by troops caused concern. Symington asked his views on Korean offer of two divisions. Pleven said they would undoubtedly be at least matched by Chinese forces. Symington asked his views as to US backing up Koreans by carrier-based planes using tactical atomic bombs. Pleven said he would prefer to have Secretary say at Geneva that Chinese planes flying over IC would be met by US Air Force. When Symington returned to subject of atomic bombs, Pleven stressed lack of suitable targets.

In response to Bridges' question as to any possible basis for solution, Pleven said that worst solution would be formation of coalition government containing even minimum number of Viet Minh ministers, which would result in Communist take-over within six months. Also undesirable, but less so, would be splitting of IC between north and south or perhaps giving Viet Minh smaller area in north. In response to Symington question as to what he envisaged at Geneva, Pleven stated it depended primarily on US which held all the trumps and alone could discourage China from aiding Ho. To Symington's suggestion that Moscow also held some trumps, Pleven expressed the view that China would be more interested in Washington's cards than in Moscow's. To Symington's question as to how France would react to possibility of its turning over war to US and getting out of IC completely, Pleven said that this idea would be most unpalatable since people would ask what their great efforts over last 8 years had been for.

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[1] Senators Styles Bridges of New Hampshire and Stuart Symington of Missouri were on visit in France. Both were members of the Senate Armed Services Committee; Bridges was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

Symington has asked for memorandum of conversation [3] but is being advised some of it too highly classified and high points being telegraphed to Department.

ACHILLES

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[3] Not found in Department of State files.

740.5/3-654 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, March 6, 1954—6 p. m.

3238. Repeated information Saigon 361, London unnumbered. March 5 session Assembly debate on IC was brief,[1] lasting less than 4 hours, largely perfunctory in nature and set stage for second phase of debate scheduled to begin morning March 9. However, it was evident from the outset that Geneva conference overshadowed all other considerations and that at most the debate was not likely to result in anything more than an expression of the Assembly's views in regard to the government's position to be taken at Geneva. There was no indication that anyone in the Assembly really wished to disturb present prospect of reaching some settlement of Indochinese conflict at Geneva. Hence government's position was one of confidence and oppositions largely one in name only since it apparently had no quarrel to pick with government's Geneva objective.

In résumé, deputies posing interpellations, Daniel Mayer (SOC), Giovoni (Communist), and De Chambrun (Progressive), opened session by calling on government to accept Nehru's cease-fire proposal and to enter into immediate negotiations with Viet Minh. Laniel then stated government position which proved to be principal event of afternoon (summary of which follows in separate telegram).[2] Mitterand (UDSR), Daladier (Radical Socialist), and Le Lachenal (Independent Peasant), urged acceptance cease-fire prior Geneva. While opposing government's consideration Nehru proposal or negotiations with Viet Minh, Frederic-Dupont (ARS) stated ARS placing all its hopes on Geneva. Last speaker was Sestebe (Independent Republican) who took position that is necessary find solution at Geneva.

It was really not debate since all of speakers, including Laniel, appeared to be in general agreement on desirability of finding an early settlement of IC conflict. Although Laniel in effect ruled out acceptance of cease-fire proposal prior to Geneva, he made it unmistakably clear that France hopes to find diplomatic solution to conflict then. On other hand, it was clearly evident that opposition, despite effectiveness of its oratory, was unable to muster any very effective arguments to support its position that an immediate cease-fire would improve prospects of settlement at Geneva. The government's position that discussion of IC would be joined at Geneva in April and that government intended to do everything possible to find solution there, clearly cut ground from under opposition and it was apparent that latter recognized it. Embassy gained distinct impression during debate that with Geneva conference in offing, government in firm position to encounter effectively any Assembly pressure at this time for exploring possibility negotiations with Viet Minh or Nehru's cease-fire proposal, and that there is no likelihood of any action resulting that would pose immediate threat to continuation of, or result in an appreciable modification of present French position on IC prior Geneva. On other hand and as indicated above, in Embassy's views principal significance debate lies in its preview of, and its possible impact on, French Government's IC position for Geneva.

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[1] For the record of the debate, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1954, Débats*, pp. 706–723.

[2] The Embassy transmitted highlights of the statement by Premier Laniel in telegram 3240, Mar. 6; for text, see vol. XVI, p. 435. For the record of remarks by Laniel, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1954, Débats*, pp. 713–715.

In his statement Laniel clearly ruled out any consideration by government of cease-fire proposal prior to Geneva by setting forth for first time those conditions that would have to be met prior to French agreement of any such move. Conditions that he outlined (contained separate telegram)[3] were obviously such as to make them clearly unacceptable to Viet Minh. (Foreign Office official who had drafted Laniel speech said at time that these conditions had been drawn with just that thought in mind, i.e., to rule out any question France considering any cease-fire proposal prior Geneva.) Although this is element of Laniel's speech which has been given prominence in press in Embassy's view significance of Laniel's statement lies in the clear indication contained therein of the French government's views on the forthcoming Geneva conference. It is not difficult to discern in Laniel's statement that if settlement is to be reached on IC at Geneva, it will be up to France's allies to make concessions to Communist China with all that that implies for US. (The same Foreign Office official when asked about recent French articles taking line to effect settlement of IC at Geneva hinges on revision US China policy, indicated that this would be, in his opinion, the fundamental issue at Geneva and one on which success or failure would rest.) Embassy's only comment on this score at this time would be that implications apparent Laniel's speech are pretty accurate forecast of how the French position for Geneva will shape up between now and April 26.

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[3] In telegram 3240 from Paris, Mar. 6, the conditions set forth by Laniel were described as follows:

"(1) The total evacuation of Laos by troops having infiltrated there; (2) although military situation in Cambodia different, analogous precautions would be required there; (3) in northern Vietnam a sort of no man's land would have to be created around the periphery of the Tonkin Delta and the Viet Minh units that have infiltrated the Delta would have to withdraw under strictly controlled evacuation; (4) in central Vietnam the Viet Minh units would have to withdraw to delimited zones in such manner as to guarantee security of our troops and the people; (5) in southern Vietnam, the Viet Minh forces should be disarmed or evacuated. To all these guarantees ought to be added other measures of security and control designed to assure that with suspension of fighting our adversaries cannot carry out certain activities, or proceed to reinforcement or regroupment, as was the case in Korea during the long period of conversations." (751G.00/3–654)

DILLON

751G.00/3-854 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, March 8, 1954—noon.

478. Repeated information Saigon 373, Paris 197. Paris limit distribution. General Cogny says evidence appears to be converging toward indication that Viet Minh will attack Dien-Bien-Phu, now that Viet Minh Division 308 has withdrawn from advanced positions in Laos. Cogny admits, however, that there may be some degree of wishful thinking in his analysis, since he continues to believe that such attack would be highly advantageous to his own forces.

Following period of relative calm in delta last two weeks in February, Viet Minh activity this area has been stepped up appreciably since beginning of March. Cogny referred to Viet Minh sabotage of 11 planes at Gialam airport (Contel 472)[1] as "a bitter blow," but expressed hope that more of the damaged aircraft could be salvaged than at first appeared likely.

STURM

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[1] Telegram 472 from Hanoi, Mar. 4, reporting the sabotaging that day of 11 aircraft at Hanoi civil airport, is not printed. (751G.5/3-454)

751G.11/3-954 : Despatch

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, March 9, 1954.

No. 383

Subject: Distaff Difficulties of Bao Dai

In the course of a conversation yesterday evening, Baroness Agnes Didelot, who is sister of the Empress of Vietnam, once more expressed her mounting concern at the do-nothing attitude of her brother-in-law and her anxiety lest the promising young Crown Prince be corrupted by his father and particularly by the Empress Dowager at Hué, who she feels seeks to destroy the character of the young Prince in an effort to maintain her own ascendancy over Bao Dai. Baroness Didelot, as reported in the reference telegram, feels strongly that the young Prince should come back to Vietnam and do his military service, thus becoming a symbol of active leadership by the Imperial family at this time of national crisis.[1] She likewise represents the young Prince as eager to return and to undertake military service.

Baroness Didelot is a not entirely disinterested observer of His Majesty's activities. In particular, she is currently enraged because one of Bao Dai's concubines recently gave birth in the American Hospital at Paris to a son by Bao Dai and passed the word at the American Hospital that she, the concubine, was in fact a "sister-in-law" of His Majesty. In consequence, Baroness Didelot, who is the only legitimate sister-in-law of Bao Dai, has been receiving congratulations from across the bar sinister, and has not relished the left-handed compliment.

According to Baroness Didelot, the concubine in question has been with Bao Dai since the days in Hanoi when he abdicated in favor of the Vietnamese People's Republic headed by Ho Chi Minh. Baroness Didelot last night made the flat assertion that the concubine was in fact planted in Bao Dai's household by Ho Chi Minh and that she has since continued to serve as a Vietminh spy. It might be worth discreet inquiry by Embassy Paris to ascertain the validity of this charge.

ROBERT MCCLINTOCK

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[1] This despatch referred to telegram 1630 from Saigon, Mar. 9, in which the Embassy suggested that the advantages of the return of the Crown Prince to Vietnam might be pointed out to Bao Dai. (751G.11/3–954) In telegram 3304 from Paris, Mar. 11, the Embassy recommended against any intervention by the United States in the matter, since it would probably be offensive to the French. (751G.11/3–1154). Telegram 1690 to Saigon, Mar. 17, repeated to Paris as telegram 3203, read as follows:

"Department does not believe U.S. representatives should at this time take active role in matter Crown Prince's early return Viet Nam but would be interested in learning of whatever views Vietnamese and French contacts may volunteer regarding what might be promising development." (751G.11/3–1754)

751G.00/3–1054 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 10, 1954—6 p. m.

1638. Repeated information Paris 506. Former Prime Minister Tran Van Huu last night expressed grave apprehension over outcome of Geneva conference. He said, "If they agree on an armistice and a plebiscite, we are lost to the Communists". Only solution Huu could see was somehow to strengthen national Vietnamese leadership and to continue military struggle until more solid basis for negotiation could be found. This would require, he thought, at least 18 months. He felt Laniel's proposals (cf. Paris telegram 3240 repeated Saigon 362)[1] were to some extent impractical, as for example suggestion that Viet-Minh in south Vietnam be disarmed or evacuated, on ground that it was impossible to distinguish between a daytime Vietnamese and a nighttime Viet-Minh. Only sound basis for cease-fire would be agreement to seal Sino-Indochinese frontier.

Huu said that recent demands on Bao Dai for national elections should be taken seriously despite mollifying communiqué to contrary such as that issued by Vietnamese Commissariat General in Paris (Paris telegram 3259 repeated Saigon 365).[2] He said there was genuine upsurge of popular feeling in favor of elections and ultimately national assembly. Bao Dai, by opposing this demand, despite his consistent promises ever since 1949, was steadily losing strength and prestige. In fact, in Huu's estimate, Bao Dai is now so weak that even recourse outlined Embtel 1630 repeated Paris 504, March 9[3] would be "too late". Huu's remedy, tinged most certainly by personal ambition and by rancor at his dismissal from Premiership two years ago, was government by group of strong men, either with or without aegis of Bao Dai.

McClintock

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[1] See footnotes 2 and 3, pp. 1097 and 1098.

[2] Telegram 3259 from Paris, Mar. 8, not printed, contained the translation of a communiqué issued by the Vietnamese High Commissariat on Mar. 5 regarding demands made to Bao Dai by the "National Union Movement for Peace" looking toward the creation of a national assembly prior to the Geneva Conference. (751G.00/3-854)

[3] See footnote 1, *supra.*

396.1 GE/3-1054 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, March 10, 1954—6 p. m.

1640. Repeated information Paris 508, Hanoi unnumbered. Saigon vernacular press has been gazing with fearful fascination at forthcoming Geneva conference since Berlin meeting and attention can be expected to remain riveted on Geneva during remaining weeks. Distillation of editorial comment available to Embassy reveals several clear lines of reaction in midst of general nervousness.

(1) Emerging clearly and strongly is deep desire for peace. Little interest is shown in prosecuting war to successful conclusion and most papers show resentment at thoughts of "intervention" of other powers, expressing forebodings that war may thereby be enlarged or internationalized rather than ended. Suggestion of Korean troops for Indochina evoked strong adverse reaction and talk of direct US participation in war is viewed with alarm. Recurrent theme is "let Vietnamese settle their own affairs". Connected with this is charge in certain quarters that US is bent on prolonging war and is compelling France and AS to continue fruitless and bloody conflict from which only US can benefit.

(2) Prevailing view is one of pessimism and doubt that Geneva conference will succeed. Feeling is expressed generally that only success, if there is one, will be in possible working out of balance of interests among big powers with Vietnam's interests disregarded. In particular, Korean case and especially "division" of Korea is regarded as dangerous precedent.

(3) Third strong theme is fear of being "sold down the river". France is suspected of double dealing and wishing to "negotiate with both sides", namely with Vietnamese representatives in Paris and with Viet Minh supported by Chinese Communists in Geneva. This has led to statements, especially in north, that present negotiators in Paris do not represent Vietnam and that only true representatives would be those named by National Assembly to be based on general elections which should be held before Geneva. (See Embtels 1624 and 1625 repeated Paris 502, 503.) [1]

Press attitudes can be regarded as reflection of general uneasiness and anxiety which will continue until results of Geneva become clear. Reluctance of press to take strongly anti-Communist line has been noted and "attentism" will certainly grow. Expression of these views, made easier by recent relaxation of press censorship, may serve in part as catalyst provoking further thinking on current problems.[2]

McClintock

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[1] Telegrams 1624 from Saigon, Mar. 7, and 1625 of Mar. 8, neither printed, concerned a press report of Mar. 6 that nationalist elements had presented Bao Dai with an ultimatum demanding the immediate establishment of an elected national assembly. (751G.00/3–754; 751G.00/3–854)

[2] Telegram 1653 from Saigon, Mar. 12, read as follows: "Re last paragraph Embtel 1640, repeated Paris 508. USIS has noted since decision at Berlin discuss Indochina at Geneva conference that Saigon Vietnamese press has ceased making use of normal supply of anti-Communist editorial material and factual stories. This material accepted from USIS but not published." (396.1 GE/3–1254)

740.5/3–1054 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, March 10, 1954—7 p. m.

3293. Repeated information Saigon 373, London, Moscow unnumbered. Embassy telegram 3238 (Saigon 361, London unnumbered) March 6. Embassy's analysis Assembly IC debate follows:[1]

National Assembly IC debate, which resumed at 4 o'clock March 9, concluded near midnight in adoption of government-accepted ordre du jour (text Embassy telegram 3285)[2] which had been modified principally to make more specific Assembly's charge to the government with respect to Geneva and to clarify Assembly's views on French Union concept in view of current Franco-Vietnamese negotiations. Although debate resulted as anticipated in passage of government-accepted ordre du jour, and in that sense constituted government victory, it was preceded by what proved to be unexpectedly stormy session touched off and highlighted by Pierre Mendes-France's appeal for direct negotiations with Viet Minh. The true significance of governments victory, however, is not entirely reflected in wording of the ordre du jour adopted (which is much more explicit than that of October 27),[3] nor in number of votes cast for government ordre du jour.

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[1] The Embassy provided additional analysis of the debate in the National Assembly of Mar. 5 and 9 regarding Indochina in despatch 2398, Mar. 18. (751G.00/3–1854)

[2] The text as transmitted in telegram 3285 from Paris, Mar. 10, read as follows:

"Assembly pays tribute to heroism of combatants of French Expeditionary Corps Indochina and bows before sacrifices of those who, for 8 years, have gloriously fallen for a just cause,

"Expresses satisfaction with reunion, April 26, 1954, at Geneva, of a conference having objective of defining the proper means of putting an end to painful Indochinese conflict,

"Takes account of statements of government reaffirming its will to seize and to explore all solutions capable of bringing about as rapidly as possible (le plus rapidement possible) the cessation of the conflict and of assuring the peace and liberty in the Associated States indissolubly united within French Union,

"Recalls solemnly that France supports the armed struggle in Indochina by virtue of the provisions of the constitution relative to the French Union to which the Associated States have already voluntarily adhered and that any repudiation of those provisions by the aforesaid States releases France from its obligations with respect to the latter in letting it judge measures that would be dictated by its interest inseparable from that of free world."

The Embassy reported that the first paragraph was adopted unanimously, with the exception of the Communists. The second and third paragraphs were adopted 349 to 263, with the fourth paragraph being approved 377 to 235. (751G.00/3–1054)

For the record of the debate on Indochina which occurred in the National Assembly on Mar. 9, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1954, Débats*, pp. 754–762, 764–774, and 788–795.

[3] For a summary translation of the motion adopted on Oct. 27, 1953, see footnote 1, p. 853.

Desirability of reaching negotiated settlement of the IC conflict was not at issue in this debate, nor was this objective questioned by either side. When reduced to its simplest expression, fundamental issue of debate was whether to try to reach settlement with Viet Minh now or whether to first wait and see whether settlement could be reached at Geneva. And it is in this context that the ordre du jour adopted must be viewed. Course of debate as observed does not, on the other hand, permit conclusion that members of Assembly voting for government-accepted ordre du jour were in effect approving continuation of war in IC without certain definite reservations as regards factor of time.

Government, without promising in so many words, made it crystal clear to all present that it intended to make every effort to reach satisfactory settlement of IC conflict at Geneva. Government, as anticipated, with Geneva conference "in hand", was able to carry the day; but it was victory that perhaps ought to be limited by the caveat all-too-implicit in course of debate: Let government beware if settlement is not reached at Geneva. Government obviously bought time in IC with Geneva conference but Assembly only extended credit on short-term basis. As consequence, Embassy cannot stress too strongly importance of implications apparent in this Assembly IC debate and to emphasize that Government victory of March 9 is one that will be subjected to searching and critical review if French Government unsuccessful finding IC solution Geneva. If latter fails produce tangible results, it is all too apparent that whatever French Government may be in power at that time will find itself confronted with almost insurmountable task to counter Assembly pressures to initiate steps looking toward negotiations with Viet Minh on theory that once attempt to reach agreement Chinese Communists and Soviets unsuccessfully exploited only alternative of direct negotiations remains.

As on Friday,[4] effective speakers yesterday were mostly on side of opposition. However, with government holding all trumps in form of Geneva conference, opposition was unable to convince Assembly majority that immediate exploration of more nebulous possibility of negotiations with Viet Minh was preferable to more concrete and palatable possibility of reaching agreement at Geneva. Government did not promise Assembly that it would reach an agreement at Geneva, but since it hinged its entire case on possibilities and hopes inherent in Geneva situation, there was no doubt that Assembly, in substantially going along with present French IC policy until Geneva, would take critical view of failure to reach such agreement at Geneva. Laniel, who spoke briefly at beginning of afternoon and before

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[4] Mar. 5.

Mendes-France (see separate telegram),[5] stated that "the only thing that government can promise you is of defending tomorrow, with will of succeeding, cause of peace and that of France".

It was Pierre Mendes-France (see separate telegram),[6] who touched off storm in Assembly debate which did not subside until passage of ordre du jour at midnight. He was followed in course of debate by Lussy (Socialist), Mitterand (USDR), and Daladier (Radical Socialist), all of whom tellingly supported his thesis. In contrast with his reticence on IC in his June 1953 investiture speech, Mendes-France underlined without equivocation his wholehearted and unreserved support for immediate and direct negotiations with Viet Minh. "There is only one solution, solution difficult, painful, cruel and in certain respects unjust. It is direct negotiation". He termed Geneva clever diplomatic maneuver to prolong war in hope of obtaining US military intervention, and termed government policy on Geneva incomprehensible in asking whether government thought Communist China would cease aiding Viet Minh gratuitously. "If China does not obtain satisfaction on Korea and Soviets on Germany, why would they concede on Vietnam?" In dramatic exchange with Bidault, who corrected Mendes-France for referring Geneva conference as "five-power" conference and for implying IC phase conference would be subordinated Korean phase, Bidault stated in conclusion: "You say our negotiations will fail; I reply: That is what (I meant by saying earlier) one will see".

Assembly's views on the French Union concept as set forth in fourth paragraph ordre du jour are of particular significance when related to present Franco-Vietnamese negotiations. The Assembly has now said that if Associated States repudiate any provision of constitution relative for French Union, France is relieved of its obligations toward these states. This provision, if applied, could foredoom to failure present negotiations[7] since Vietnamese position is and has been that French Union concept as defined constitution is unacceptable. Additionally, as Embassy has indicated previously, government's only hope short of constitutional revision lies in disregarding certain French Union provisions title VIII constitution and in defining relationship in bilateral instrument along considerably broader lines.

DILLON

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[5] A summary of the remarks delivered by Premier Laniel was transmitted in telegram 3298 from Paris, Mar. 10, not printed. (751G.00/3–1054)

[6] The Embassy transmitted a free translation of the highlights of the statement delivered by Mendès-France in telegram 3312 from Paris, Mar. 11, not printed. It was noted that the applause registered during the presentation split the National Assembly hemicycle exactly at the center. (751.00/3–1154)

[7] In telegram 3256 from Paris, Mar. 8, the Embassy reported that French-Vietnamese negotiations had opened that morning. (751G.00/3–854)

Editorial Note

The following exchange occurred at the President's news conference of March 10, 1954:

"Q. James J. Patterson, *New York News:* Mr. President, Senator Stennis said yesterday that we were in danger of becoming involved in World War III in Indochina because of the Air Force technicians there. What will we do if one of those men is captured or killed?

"The President. I will say this: there is going to be no involvement of America in war unless it is a result of the constitutional process that is placed upon Congress to declare it. Now, let us have that clear; and that is the answer."

For the full record of the President's news conference of March 10, 1954, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, pages 299–309.

751G.00/3–1154: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, March 11, 1954—8 p. m.

3315. Repeated information Saigon 382. Limit distribution. Am advised Pleven lunched today with five senior American correspondents (AP, *New York Times*, *Herald Tribune*, CBS, *Newsweek*) on pre-arranged basis anything he said could be used but without quotation or attribution to any French Government source and spoke along following lines:

He saw no prospect of satisfactory military solution and no point in negotiating with puppet Ho. On other hand, French Government was pinning great hopes on finding solution at Geneva. Key to situation was China and only nation in position to offer China anything of interest was US. China would want lightening of embargo and recognition. He asked whether US could make any concessions on either line if Korean and Indochina wars could be ended on satisfactory basis. On other hand, he felt it would be mistake for US to commit itself in advance not to intervene by force in Indochina since Chinese and Russian uncertainty on this point would be one of West's valuable cards. He said that if Geneva failed to produce Indochina solution, present government would fall and with it Southeast Asia since next government would get out of Indochina at any price. He said it would also mean end of EDC and probably French Atlantic Policy.

Pleven regretted he could not go to US at this time himself but was sending General Ely within next few days and hoped he would have opportunity to talk fully with Acting Secretary as well as Admiral Radford.

While substance of foregoing will presumably be used by correspondents who attending, this message marked limit distribution with view to maintaining secrecy as to source.[1]

DILLON

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[1] On Mar. 12, Walter Bedell Smith, the Acting Secretary of State, sent a copy of this telegram to the White House for the President. The memorandum of transmittal read as follows: "If there is a press and Congressional uproar over the possibility of U.S. concessions to Communist China at Geneva, the attached telegram may explain its origin. M. Pleven has told five senior American correspondents that the Indochina problem could be resolved only by Communist China, that Communist China would want recognition and an easing of the trade embargo, and that the key nation in making these concessions must be the United States. It seems to me that Pleven has been extremely free with our negotiating position." (751G.00/3–1154)

A memorandum of Mar. 15 from Ann Whitman, the President's personal secretary, to Under Secretary of State Smith, read as follows:

"The President saw your memorandum of March 12th regarding an interview M. Pleven had in Paris, with the attached message from Ambassador Dillon, #3315.

"The President wrote the following long hand note to you:

'Bedell:

'If first sentence of second paragraph is final French conclusion, why don't they withdraw request for military aid? Might be well to ask.!!!'" (751G.00/3–1554)

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 188th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 11, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 188th Meeting of the Council were: The President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Acting Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General (for Items 2, 3 and 4); the Secretary of Commerce (for Items 5, 6 and 7); Mr. Morrison for the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Items 2, 3 and 4); the Federal Civil Defense Administrator (for Items 2, 3 and 4); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; Sherman Adams, the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler and C. D. Jackson, Special Assistants to the President; Gen. Persons, Deputy Assistant to the President; Walter S. DeLany and Kenneth R. Hansen, Foreign Operations Administration; Marshall Smith, Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Internal Affairs; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Mar. 12.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

. . . .

1. *Significant world developments affecting U.S. security*

. . . .

The most serious developments in Indochina were the Vietminh raids against airfields in the Tonkin Delta. Mr. [Allen] Dulles thought it obvious that the Vietminh were attempting to create incidents which would involve U.S. mechanics stationed at airfields within the Delta.

. . . .

751G.00/3–1154

Memorandum by the Chairman of the Operations Coordinating Board (Smith) to the President

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 11, 1954.

Subject: Report on Program for Indochina

On behalf of the Operations Coordinating Board I am transmitting for your consideration a report on a program for securing military victory in Indochina short of overt involvement by U.S. Combat Forces, in accordance with the instructions of the National Security Council, NSC Action 1019*a*, January 21, 1954.[1]

This report was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Central Intelligence, and Mr. C. D. Jackson.

This report outlines certain specific procedures, certain objectives, and certain courses of action for immediate implementation by the Departments and Agencies concerned.

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[1] For NSC Action No. 1019, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 181st Meeting of the National Security Council, Jan. 21, p. 986. Pursuant to that action, the President's Special Committee prepared two reports, "Part I," and "Part II." Part I, printed here, dealt with immediate measures to be taken with regard to Indochina. Part II, reporting on longer range policy with regard to Southeast Asia, is discussed in footnote 8, p. 1257. Regarding a separate report prepared by the Special Committee with respect to military implications of negotiations at the Geneva Conference, see the first editorial note, p. 1148.

The Operations Coordinating Board on March 3 approved this report and its implementation is now under way under the coordination of the Board.[2]

WALTER B. SMITH

[Annex]

Report by the President's Special Committee on Indochina[3]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, March 2, 1954.]

PART I
INDO-CHINA

I—THE PROBLEM

To set forth a program of action without resort to overt combat operations by U.S. forces, designed to: (*a*) secure the military defeat of Communist forces in Indo-China, and (*b*) establish a western oriented complex in Southeast Asia incorporating Indo-China, Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

II—MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS

(A) Indo-China is considered the keystone of the arch of Southeast Asia, and the Indo-Chinese peninsula must not be permitted to fall under Communist domination. This requires the defeat in Indo-China of military and quasi-military Communist forces and the development of conditions conducive to successful resistance to any Communist actions to dominate the area. Measures taken in Indo-China, however, must be in consonance with U.S. and allied action taken in the Far East and Southeast Asia to defeat Communist efforts to extend their control of the area.

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[2] The minutes of the meeting of the Operations Coordinating Board of Mar. 3, 1954, indicate that the following principals were present: Chairman Walter Bedell Smith, Under Secretary of State; Allen Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence; Harold Stassen, Director of the Foreign Operations Administration; Roger Kyes, Deputy Secretary of Defense; C. D. Jackson, Special Assistant to the President; Theodore Streibert, Director of the U.S. Information Agency; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; and Elmer Staats, Executive Officer, Operations Coordinating Board.

The minutes record that the OCB approved the Special Committee Report as amended during the meeting and authorized its transmittal to the President with the indication that implementation was under way. The Board assumed responsibility for continuing coordination of actions contained in the report, thus discharging the Special Committee from further responsibility. (OCB files, lot 62 D 430, "OCB Minutes")

The Operations Coordinating Board was established by Executive Order on Sept. 3, 1953, to provide for integrated implementation of NSC decisions. For information on the operations and functions of the OCB, see volume II.

[3] This report does not accompany the source text of the memorandum for the President in file 751G.00/3–1154. The copy printed here is from PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina". The following documents are present with the source text of the report: a memorandum of transmittal of Mar. 2 by Gen. Graves B. Erskine, chairman of the working group which actually drafted the report, to the Executive Officer of the OCB, Elmer B. Staats; a memorandum by Staats circulating the report to OCB members, Mar. 10; a copy of Smith's memorandum of Mar. 11 transmitting the report to the President (above); and a memorandum from Staats to the Board, Mar. 15, circulating Under Secretary Smith's memorandum.

(B) Feasible actions to provide for the immediate U.S. assistance requested by the French for operations in the Dien Bien Phu–Central Laos sector have been taken. The measures recommended herein will hardly affect the immediate tactical situation in those areas (which, while serious, is not as critical as public pronouncements suggest). They are designed to effect a general improvement in the over-all situation in Indo-China, which is such that all actions must be considered a matter of urgency to be implemented without delay. They are also designed to achieve the desired results in Indo-China without overt involvement by U.S. combat forces.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Central Intelligence Agency have developed a program of support for the Navarre Plan in Indo-China. This plan considers certain basic immediate requirements for continued U.S. support for Franco-Vietnamese operations and some of these recommendations have been implemented. The remaining actions have been incorporated hereunder in paragraph III (A). However, there is implicit in many of these proposals a requirement for a stronger French political and military effort as well as more effective support for Vietnamese participation. The alternative to more precise and extensive action by the French and Vietnamese, as proposed by the U.S., appears to be a continued stalemate or debacle in Indo-China.

(D) It would appear that France cannot withdraw her forces from Indo-China without serious deterioration of her position as a world power.

(E) The key to the success of military operations continues to be the generation of well-trained, properly led indigenous forces effectively employed in combat operations against the Communist forces in Viet Minh. The eventual goal must be the development of homogenous indigenous units with a native officer corps. In this the French have had, for whatever reason, insufficient success. Such success will ultimately be dependent upon the inspiration of the local population to fight for their own freedom from Communist domination and the willingness of the French both to take the measures to stimulate that inspiration and to more fully utilize the native potential. At the same time, French sensitivities with respect to their sacrifices, responsibilities, and capabilities must be respected, as we persuade and assist them to correct existing deficiencies.

(F) The U.S. objective in Indo-China should be centralized U.S. control and coordination of all U.S. military, military aid, and "unconventional warfare" (which includes psychological warfare, guerrilla warfare, and certain aspects of pacification operations) mechanisms in Indo-China.

(G) There is in Indo-China, or programmed for Indo-China (and anticipating continued U.S. assistance) a sufficient amount of equipment and supplies and a potential manpower pool sufficient eventually to defeat the Communists decisively if properly utilized and maintained and *if* the situation continues to permit this manpower to be converted into military effectiveness. In their own report the French have acknowledged that U.S. aid in many areas has exceeded French capacity to absorb it.

(H) Measures advocated by the U.S. must be so characterized by determination, strength, confidence, and justice that they serve to enhance the support of all Asians who seek freedom, both from Communist domination and western colonization. Asians must be convinced that they will have a far better future with the Free World than under Communism and that there is not to be reinstitution of colonialism.

(I) The Communists in Indo-China, Southeast Asia, China, and Moscow must be made aware that the United States, France, and the free governments of the Far East are united, steadfast, and capable of accomplishing their aims.

(J) The U.S. must take the initiative in persuading the French and Vietnamese to overcome these deficiencies. Such initiative must, however, avoid French exploitation in its unilateral interest and must avoid actions which will lead to involuntary U.S. combat participation.

III—ACTIONS REQUIRED

(A) The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with the Central Intelligence Agency, have recommended certain courses of action which are susceptible of immediate implementation. Of those not already undertaken, the following should be completed as a matter of urgency:

1. The French air forces in Indo-China should be augmented, particularly with respect to air and ground-crew personnel from military and/or civilian resources within the framework of the French Vietnamese armed forces. Steps should be taken through existing contacts with the French Government to satisfy these requirements; to explore the possibilities of establishing a volunteer air group; and to make the necessary arrangements to replace the uniformed U.S. military personnel being temporarily assigned to assist the French in maintenance functions.

Action: Defense

. . . .

3. A source of funds in the amount of $124 millions to meet additional urgent requirements for Indo-China for all services must be determined. Currently for FY 1954 there has been provided to the French effort in Indo-China a total of $1,115 millions in military assistance, defense support, and military support projects. Unless a source of funds other than MDAP is made available to meet these additional requirements, the matériel action and training support for

Indo-China will have to come at the expense of the world-wide FY 1954 MDA program.

Action: Defense

(B) The present situation in Indo-China, however, indicates that in addition to the immediate actions outlined above, the following steps must be taken as a matter of priority:

Politically

1. As a result of events which have occurred during recent weeks, and particularly in the light of the forthcoming Geneva Convention, certain actions which might have been susceptible of direct negotiation with the French Government now require more circumspect negotiation. Nonetheless, it should remain the U.S. objective to obtain French active acceptance formally or informally of the following:

> *a.* Modification of the mission of the U.S. MAAG, Indo-China, to provide for expanded strength, including a planning staff (composed initially of up to 10 highly selected officer personnel); authority to conduct liaison with senior training and planning staff sections; and authority to make recommendations concerning the conduct of operations. This relationship may be justified entirely within the framework of the present agreement with the French Government that "the French Government will continue to facilitate exchanges of information and views on a continuing basis between French and U.S. military authorities and will take into account the views expressed by the latter with respect to the development and carrying out of the French strategic plans without in any way, of course, detracting from exclusive French responsibility for adoption and execution thereof."[4] It should be presented that the U.S. has complete confidence that France can win the struggle against the Communists in Indo-China and that expanded U.S. representation at the French Headquarters is designed to provide the maximum and most effective assistance in aiding the French to achieve common free world objectives in Indo-China.
>
> *b.* Gradual assignment of additional U.S. personnel up to a level of 50 specially qualified personnel in Indo-China as such assignments become feasible. These individuals should have the mission of acting as instructors, principally with the Vietnamese forces and in non-combat areas as recommended by the Chief, MAAG, and concurred in by the local Commander.

. . . .

2. It should also be a U.S. objective to seek (both with the active French and other appropriate governments as well as with the necessary U.S. authorities) the methods of attaining the following:

> *a.* Modification of present Foreign Legion enlistment requirements with reduced enlistment period for service in Indo-China

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[4] Reference is to the U.S.-French exchange of letters of Sept. 29, 1953; for texts, see p. 812.

and expansion of the Foreign Legion to include the formation of air units.

b. Recruitment in certain foreign countries, especially Germany, Italy, and possibly Asia, of non-French personnel with appropriate technical qualifications for service in Indo-China with the Foreign Legion.

c. Provision of certain U.S. personnel, on a voluntary basis, for service in the French forces without sacrifice of their U.S. citizenship.

Action: Defense, State

3. In addition to the urgent actions outlined above, the following additional actions are suggested as contributing to the advancement of U.S. interests with respect to Indo-China:

a. The U.S. should continue to stress and emphasize in every way our purpose in helping the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos through the French is to maintain their independence, and should reiterate our position regarding that independence.

Action: Operations Coordinating Board

b. A vigorous U.S. effort might be made to restore Bao Dai's health and to persuade him and . . . to take a more active part in the struggle against the Viet Minh. This effort should include action designed to encourage Bao Dai to withdraw from his semi-isolation to visit his troops, to reside in his capital and otherwise to comport himself like a dynamic Chief of State. This effort might be correlated with measures designed to have some U.S. military assistance delivered directly to the Associated States instead of through the French. Such action might appropriately be taken upon the conclusion of or during the latter phases of the Geneva conference.

Action: Operations Coordinating Board

Militarily

1. A general officer of two-star rank, as designated by the Department of Defense, should be appointed Chief, MAAG, Indo-China, upon relief of the present Chief in February 1954. He will be subject to the coordination of the U.S. Ambassador to Indo-China, but will be under the military command of U.S. Commander-in-Chief, Pacific. He will command all U.S. military personnel and covert assets in Indo-China relative to his mission and will be personally responsible for preventing the involvement of uniformed U.S. personnel in combat.

2. Subsequent to the receipt of French governmental approval (and desirably at their invitation), but at the earliest possible time, the Chief, MAAG, Indo-China, should be provided with necessary staff sections, and assigned additional duties involving expanded liaison with the French and Vietnam forces. He should be directed and authorized to advise and assist the Franco-Vietnamese command in training and planning, and to make recommendations concerning the

conduct of operations. In this connection he should urgently seek the following:

a. Development and implementation of a sound concept and operational plan for the conduct of operations in Indo-China.

b. Intensive and aggressive operations with a view to winning a victory of consequence at the earliest time, and exploitation of this success politically and psychologically.

c. Effective pacification of French-Vietnamese held areas, emphasizing security of individuals and property through proper utilization of defense groups and guards and institutions of adequate local civil administration.

d. Training and properly equipping Vietnam units with emphasis upon the institution of adequate officer, NCO, and technical training courses.

. . . .

Action: Defense, . . . FOA

3. Concurrently with the tasks assigned above, arrangements should be made to develop an over-all concept designed to achieve the subjugation of Communist forces in Indo-China and the pacification of the area. This concept should be provided the Chief, MAAG, Indo-China, as guidance in seeking the accomplishment of the task assigned in paragraph 2 above.

Action: Defense, . . .

Information and Psychological

1. Concurrently with the political and military actions outlined above, and under the coordination of the Operations Coordinating Board, a specific domestic and foreign information campaign should be developed and maintained, particularly for the period leading up to the Geneva conference, to de-emphasize "hysteria" publicity, and to bring about widespread recognition of and appropriate attention to the following themes:

a. France, in supporting the fight of the Associated States of Indo-China against Communist domination, is the principal nation now shedding its blood for the freedom of others.

b. The French Government has made major sacrifices in terms of its young military manpower, its economic resources, and its political position in order to defend the cause of liberty and freedom from Communism in Indo-China.

c. The French Government has accepted the principle of self government and sovereignty for the Associated States of Indo-China and has in fact more than satisfied the initial demands of Ho Chi Minh, thus providing evidence that the Viet Minh are fighting not for freedom but for the Communist cause.

d. The cause of the Associated States of Indo-China is the cause of all countries in South Asia who desire freedom from Communist domination and self determination with respect to their political and economic objectives.

e. The cause of Viet Minh as with all Communists is the cause of colonization and subservience to Kremlin rule as was the cause in China, in North Korea and in the European satellites.

Action: State, Defense, . . . USIA

2. A specific U.S. psychological warfare program for Indo-China should be developed immediately, including overt and covert projects, under Operations Coordinating Board coordination, with paramount emphasis on the establishment of a climate of opinion which associates all outside support with the achievement of Indo-Chinese national aspiration. Benefit will accrue from U.S. courses of action in direct proportion to the degree they are implemented through indigenous peoples rather than through direct support of the French. The U.S. psychological warfare program should therefore provide for the following:

a. The establishment under the U.S. Ambassador to Indo-China of an operations advisory group, including representatives of the U.S. Military Mission in Indo-China, the Department of State, the Foreign Operations Administration . . . as appropriate to coordinate the non-military aspects of U.S. psychological operations within Indo-China. The Chief, MAAG, Indo-China, should be responsible for coordinating all psychological warfare activities directly relative to his expanded mission with this group.

Action: State, Defense, . . . FOA, USIA

b. Appropriate psychological warfare equipment and supplies should be assigned to the French and Vietnam forces, and key technical personnel should be assigned to the MAAG for such use as the Chief MAAG may desire.

Action: Defense, . . . FOA

c. A specific mechanism should be established within the U.S. to provide for the orientation of all official U.S. personnel assigned to duty or visiting Indo-China so that maximum favorable psychological effect is derived from all their activities and contacts.

Action: Operations Coordinating Board

d. Development of indigenous leadership which will be truly representative and symbolic of Indo-Chinese national aspirations and win the loyalty and support of the people.

Action: State, Defense, . . .

e. Subsidization of indigenous newspapers and public information media, including provision of equipment and supplies as well as air transport to remote population centers.

Action: . . . USIA

f. Upon establishment of necessary agreements with the French Government as prescribed above, augmentation of the US–Vietnam guerrilla warfare potential in Indo-China.

Action: Defense, . . .

IV—CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(A) If the above actions can be completed at an early date with full French support (and on the assumption that the Chinese Communists do not intervene overtly in Indo-China), it is considered that this program will have the effect of reversing the present situation and give promise of leading to an ultimate victory in Indo-China without overt use of U.S. military forces.

(B) However, should the immediate situation in Indo-China deteriorate drastically or should French intransigence make the substantial accomplishment of the program outlined herein impossible, the U.S. may wish to consider direct military action in Southeast Asia to ensure the maintenance of our vital interests in the area. Under such circumstances, an area concept including Malaya, Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines, as well as Indo-China, would appear essential. These ramifications are to be considered in Part II of this study as assigned to the Special Committee.[8]

(C) *It is recommended* that this program be approved by the Operations Coordinating Board and submitted to the President for immediate implementation.

(D) *It is recommended* that the Department of Defense develop, for the immediate attention of the Special Committee, a concept of operations and considerations involved in the use of U.S. armed forces in Indo-China, should such involvement be determined upon.

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[8] See footnote 1, above.

751G.00/3–1254 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, March 12, 1954—6 p. m.
[Received 10:48 a.m.]

487. Repeated information Saigon 382, Paris 202. Paris limit distribution. This morning at about 0900 hours Viet Minh for first time attacked both civil and military traffic on highway leading from Hanoi to Haiphong, RN 5, in broad daylight. At point about 30 kilometers east of Hanoi, Viet Minh regulars in uniform and believed to be elements of Regiment 42 destroyed by gun fire seven or eight vehicles, including two half-tracks, military trucks and civilian cars. Number of casualties not yet known here.

Governor Tri said today that military posts all along RN 5 Anshan–Haiphong railway line were attacked last night. None fell to the enemy, but governor has been harassed all day by calls for reinforcements.

Tri says that major Viet Minh push in Red River Delta, which was anticipated six months ago, may in fact be getting under way now. He says, however, that lateness of the season and fact that bulk of Viet Minh regular forces are still in western Tonkin area are advantageous to this side. Shortage of French Union reserves in this area is borne out by appeals made to him this week by two French commanders of military sectors to lend them National Guard units on emergency basis. Unfortunately, Tri has no uncommitted troops to make available to them.

STURM

State–JCS meetings, lot 61 D 417

Substance of Discussions of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at the Pentagon Building, March 12, 1954, 11:30 a. m.[1]

TOP SECRET

PRESENT

Admiral Radford	Mr. Walter Robertson
General Twining	Mr. Livingston Merchant
Admiral Carney	Mr. Robert Bowie
General Thomas[2]	Mr. Douglas MacArthur II
General Ridgway	Mr. Julius Katz
General Lemnitzer	Mr. Walworth Barbour
General Everest	Mr. Philip Bonsal
General Carns	Mr. Charles Stelle
General Fox	Mr. John Goodyear
Admiral Gardner	
General Partridge	
General Collins[3]	

Defense

Admiral Davis

CIA

General Cabell
Mr. Robert Amory

NSC

General Gerhart
Mr. S. Everett Gleason

[Here follows discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

Mr. MacArthur then brought up the question of U.S. reaction to possible Chinese Communist introduction of air power in Indochina.

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[1] This Department of State draft was not cleared with the participants.

[2] Lt. Gen. Gerald C. Thomas, Assistant to the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps.

[3] Gen. J. Lawton Collins, U.S. Representative to the Military Committee and the Standing Group of NATO.

Mr. Robertson pointed out that M. Pleven had asked the U.S. Government for a statement of the U.S. position in the event an enemy air force should appear in Indochina. (Mr. Robertson left a memorandum and attachments with the Joint Chiefs on this subject.)[4]

Admiral Radford pointed out that there were no air fields in Viet Minh territory which could be used by jets, and added that though there were reports of certain jet air fields in south China, he was not aware that there were any there. The Admiral added that if any MIGs did appear over Indochina, the French could give them a run for their money. He pointed out that the MIG was not a low-level flying aircraft, and that aircraft now available to the French (piston type) should be able to deal with them.

The Admiral added that there were many unpleasant questions which must be brought up and discussed, and a position on them agreed, before the Korean Political Conference on April 26. He said further that since General Ely was expected to visit the U.S. sometime in April, it was necessary to anticipate questions that the General might ask. Mr. Robertson agreed with alacrity.

There was further discussion on General Ely's visit. Admiral Radford said that General Valluy had given him a memorandum [5] referring to: (1) additional aircraft needed by the French; (2) the relationship of the United States to the military training program; and (3) psychological warfare operations in Indochina.

With respect to additional aircraft, Admiral Radford said our position was that the French were not maintaining the aircraft they already had in the way that they should, nor were they using these aircraft to the full extent possible. United States mechanics in Indochina, the Admiral continued, would have to be returned by June 15, and the French should explore the possibility of substituting Japanese, Philippine or Chinese Nationalist mechanics, adding that we could assist them to get mechanics from that source if they wanted them.

With respect to the training program, Admiral Radford said that with the MAAG we were already in a position to help, and that he had discussed this question with General Navarre and Ambassador Heath last summer.

Elaborating on the psychological warfare aspect, the Admiral said that the U.S. desired to have greater participation in it, but that we were blocked both by organizational difficulties, and by personalities.

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[4] The memorandum, titled "U.S. Reaction to Chinese Communist Introduction of Air Power in Indochina," Mar. 12, requested the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on various aspects of the question. A copy of the memorandum is in file 751G.00/3–1254. Regarding the request by French Defense Minister Pleven, see telegram 1567 from Saigon, Feb. 28, p. 1085. For the memorandum of Apr. 8 prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in response to the Department of State request, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 378–379.

[5] Not identified.

Admiral Radford felt sure that General Ely in the course of his visit would probably bring up these subjects, and would also refer to the possibility of Chinese Communist aircraft (particularly jet) over Indochina and our position in that eventuality.

Again on this general subject, Admiral Radford remarked that he was holding a press conference at two o'clock that afternoon, and that since no doubt he would be asked about the status of the O'Daniel mission, he was prepared to say that General O'Daniel was being sent out to replace General Trapnell as head of the MAAG. There was some discussion about the feasibility of making this announcement, but it was ultimately agreed that there was really no reason why it should not be done.

[Here follows discussion of other subjects.]

751G.5/3-1454 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT SAIGON, March 14, 1954—11 p. m.

1683. Repeated information Paris 521. The long expected Viet Minh attack on Dien Bien Phu, the "Verdun" which the French military command threw up in the "Thai country" in northern Indochina early last winter, began last evening at 6 o'clock, according to Ambassador Dejean who returned from Paris yesterday morning.

The Viet Minh now have approximately four divisions investing Dien [Bien] Phu. He said yesterday evening they attacked in force the southern outpost of Dien Bien Phu and two of its three northern outposts. The Viet Minh were bloodily repulsed on the southern outpost and on a northwestern outpost. But after heavy artillery preparation and an all-night attack they succeeded in occupying the northwestern outpost and destroyed three of the four companies of the Foreign Legion garrisoning it.

Today the French Command parachuted in an additional battalion and will attempt within 24 hours to retake the lost post. Some eighteen B-26's have been bombarding the outpost preparing the eventual French counterattack on it.

Dejean is confident that the French will be able to hold Dien Bien Phu because of the strength of its fortifications and its fire-power and inflict heavy losses on the attackers. Everything indicates that the Viet Minh will make a resolute attempt to take Dien Bien Phu. The Viet Minh have brought up approximately twenty 105's and some thirty 75's. In addition they have a fair number of ACA 37's. According

French intelligence Viet Minh have at Dien Bien Phu some 45,000 rounds of 37 mm shells and 20,000 rounds for the 75's. In addition they have a large number of mortars and ammunition.

French have intelligence that Viet Minh commands in other parts of Indochina have been ordered to initiate or intensify harassing operations particularly on roads used for bringing up material in order to prevent the French from concentrating their entire air transport facilities for the air-lift to Dien Bien Phu.

Not only does Dejean think the French will hold Dien Bien Phu but he regards the Viet Minh decisions to attack it as evidencing elements of desperation and weakness. Since their bloodily repulsed attack on Nasan last year the Viet Minh have avoided attacking heavily fortified French positions. Thus, they refrained from attacking Luang Prabang and Muong Sai during past weeks when they discovered how strongly they were garrisoned and fortified. Dejean thinks that the Viet Minh feel they will be in a position of weakness when the Geneva conference opens on April 26 unless meantime they can show some military victory or victories. Hence the decision to attack Dien Bien Phu.

News of the attack on Dien Bien Phu has not yet been given to the press.

HEATH

711.551/3–1554 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, March 15, 1954—10 a. m.

1687. For special handling. S/S to control distribution. I am deeply disturbed by the fact that General O'Daniel's appointment as Chief of MAAG in Saigon is firmly connected in the French mind with repeated press reports of US intentions to take a more direct hand in the Indochina war, especially in the training of the National Armies. There has been strong French reaction, both public and private, against these reports and no amount of denial will effectively dispel French suspicion and mistrust on this subject.

General Navarre has stated publicly and with great firmness in connection with earlier press reports that O'Daniel would head an American training mission to Indochina that he would oppose US participation in the formation of the National Armies. Navarre's somewhat reluctant agreement to the assignment of O'Daniel as Chief of MAAG was given with the specific condition that there would be no change in MAAG's terms of reference. Navarre has told me politely and firmly that if O'Daniel wishes to make suggestions he will listen, but he makes clear that he intends to keep full freedom of action.

Navarre, while personally getting along well with O'Daniel, has a very low opinion of his understanding of the peculiar problems of this war and of his solutions for overcoming them. He has told me that O'Daniel has a "complete lack of comprehension" (incomprehension parfaite) of this war. French High Command has regarded as ridiculous some of suggestions already made by O'Daniel. I believe it possible that O'Daniel, whom I like as a person and admire for his record as a soldier, has, in his sincerity and directness, mistaken French courtesy for approval and French evasiveness for agreement.

In view of the politely hostile French attitude which awaits O'Daniel and in light of Navarre's present opinion of him, believe that the chances are very slight for O'Daniel to influence the conduct of the war here or to improve the situation through informal advice or suasion. As a matter of fact, knowing "Iron Mike's" energetic, aggressive and forthright personality, I am convinced that there is considerable danger that he may irritate rather than influence the French. This would have the most damaging effect upon our over-all objectives.

O'Daniel's "advance guard", Lt. Colonels Rosson and Clark and Commander Josephson, whom he had expected to be integrated into respective French staffs, was received with lack of enthusiasm which is an indication of the French attitude toward the General himself and forecast of the way in which he also may be treated. Navarre and his staff greeted these officers correctly, but have succeeded in keeping them at arms length, with almost nothing to do, since their arrival. The close working relationship with the French which these officers had anticipated has not materialized and, I believe, will not materialize at least in the immediate future.

I earnestly suggest that, since O'Daniel's appointment has already been confirmed the Acting Secretary or the Under Secretary take this matter up with the appropriate high level of the Defense Department to have General O'Daniel instructed before his departure to refrain for the first few weeks or even months from action which might be interpreted by the French as intervention and to confine himself to the administration of MAAG. Later, if he succeeds in winning the confidence of the French High Command, he may be in position to make suggestions with some hope of their acceptance. I stress, however, that in the beginning he must tread softly.

In the last analysis, it is my firm conviction that, if the conduct of the war is to be stiffened and improved, it must be done in Paris, not in Saigon, and not on the level of one military commander to another.

HEATH

751J.00/3–1654 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 16, 1954—11 a. m.

1692. Repeated information Paris 525. I had a long talk yesterday evening with DeJean who returned 13th from Paris.

He still professes optimism, although a troubled optimism, that opposition in French Parliament to continuation French military effort in IC will not succeed in forcing present French Government to negotiate directly with Viet Minh. He still insists, and asserts that Laniel agrees, that there is no possibility of and no basis for an armistice with Viet Minh except on terms of a shameful sell-out or surrender to Communists. On other hand, he thinks there is some possibility that Communist China or Russia or both might agree to stopping Chinese Communist aid and support of Viet Minh. He says that Bidault thinks there are three reasons that might induce Communists to cease supporting Viet Minh: (1) It does not suit Russian's book to have Communist China attempt to take over IC and Southeast Asia at this time; that would make China too strong a partner; (2) China needs time to inaugurate its vast program of industrialization, consolidation of government control, and military build-up and in return for foreign credits and materials might stop helping Viet Minh; and (3) Communist China fears that a continuation of war here may result in its internationalization and expansion of [*to?*] China. DeJean indicated that this fear might be usefully intensified were warning American statements made prior to Geneva Conference.

He asked my reaction to Bidault's reasoning. I replied that I thought Bidault's first argument was utterly unfounded. I didn't believe there was any such rift between Moscow and Peiping at present time, nor did I believe that Moscow would object to seeing IC and Southeast Asia Communized even if it had to be done wholly by Chinese Communist force. As regards arguments two and three, speaking personally, I thought there was only a slight possibility that Communist China was thinking that way.

DeJean said there had been a very definite shift in French Parliamentary thinking regarding continuation of effort in IC. Before November government had majority support for continuing struggle. Since then (this was largely brought on by Ho Chi Minh's ridiculous peace offer) Parliamentary opinion had crystallized on desire for negotiated end to IC war. About two-fifths of Parliament, this of course, included Communists but also Socialists and some radicals and independents, were for immediate negotiations with Ho Chi Minh. Fortunately other three-fifths were willing to await outcome of Geneva conference. Staging of that conference was perhaps a good thing if only that it bought time for government. Whole IC problem had become a problem of internal French politics. Present pressure for negotiated peace might be relaxed if France were to inflict a bloody defeat on Viet Minh who are making an all-out attack on Dien Bien Phu, which DeJean felt would hold. One occurrence that had greatly helped opposition was Bodard's exaggerated despatch on alleged "ultimatum" to Bao Dai to set up a representative government.[1] There had been suspicion and distrust of Bao Dai's regime in French Parliament for a long time but this was greatly intensified as a result of that despatch. Actually people behind "ultimatum" were in no way representative of majority or general nationalist sentiment here in Vietnam. Those behind it were Bao [*Cao*] Daists and some dissident Dai Viets, factional groups, all probably egged on by ex-President Tam. Nevertheless, newspaper stories had done their work and French Parliamentary doubt as to representative capacity of Bao Dai and Buu Loc Government was result. This feeling would complicate and prolong present negotiations of Vietnamese delegation in France since opposition was opposing concessions to Vietnam on grounds that delegation was not truly representative.

DeJean is seeing Bao Dai today and will urge on him some action which would convince Vietnamese people that his regime and government would become truly representative and responsible to Vietnamese public opinion. He thought that Bao Dai should call in leaders of all various groups to get from them a clear statement that they support government in its negotiations in Paris. He, DeJean, was fearful of any attempt to stage elections at this time, particularly in view of fact that Buu Loc Government was so new and had been so taken up with preparations for negotiations in France that it had not had time to establish its authority in country at large. An alternative to elections would be for Bao Dai to set up immediately the Privy Council, formation of which had been promised in Buu Loc's inaugural address some two months ago.

He, DeJean, intends to see as many Vietnamese as he can during his stay in Saigon (he expects to return to Paris in a week or so) and tell them that these attacks on Buu Loc Government were just playing Viet Minh game, and he hoped that I would impress this on Vietnamese with whom I came in contact. I said I intended to see ex-President Huu and Tam and intended to talk to them along lines he suggested.

DeJean indicated he took philosophically attacks made on him personally in Paris. He said they mainly proceeded from two-fifths minority in Parliament who wanted negotiations with Ho Chi Minh at any price and recognized DeJean as a consistent defender of continuation of French military effort here. I remarked that General Navarre and DeJean and certainly General Trapnell and I believed that stalwart carrying out of "Navarre plan" would result in substantial victory for Franco–Vietnamese forces year or 15 months from now and inquired how it was that ranking military men like Generals Blanc and Fay on basis of a short stay here could reject Navarre's conviction of victory. DeJean said that trouble is that IC had become so much a matter of internal French policy and politics that even high-ranking French generals were unable view problem with military objectivity.

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[1] See footnote 1, p. 1102.

HEATH

751G.00/3–1654 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT SAIGON, March 16, 1954—3 p. m.

1697. Repeated information Paris 527. Situation in battle of Dien-Bien-Phu gives cause for some concern. Viet Minh artillery is zeroed in on French positions and thus far has maintained a rate of fire averaging 10 rounds per minute. Both airstrips in consequence are unusable and French must now rely entirely on airdrop for reinforcements and resupply. Defense is thus heavily dependent upon airdrops from our loaned C–119s.

Unfortunately, weather favors enemy. Area around Dien-Bien-Phu is covered by ground fog which makes it almost impossible for French artillery to undertake successful counter-battery fire. Same fog frustrates French Air Force in attempting to pick out Viet Minh artillery positions and bomb them. In consequence, so long as this fog hampers French firepower, they are in uncomfortable position of being targets for continuous Viet Minh artillery bombardment with no opportunity effectively to reply.

Loss of two airstrips makes evacuation of wounded an ever increasing problem since only means of evacuation is by helicopter and Viet Minh have anti-aircraft capability.

French have lost two outpost positions and approximately two battalions. With drop of Vietnamese parachute battalions Sunday afternoon,[1] total French Union strength at Dien-Bien-Phu is 11 battalions, but Navarre plans further reinforcements. Against French Union forces Viet Minh have 28 battalions. Contributing to fall of second outpost was desertion of a Thai company.

On brighter side of picture is fact that in fierce fighting over lost outposts, French claim to have counted between 1,500 and 2,000 dead bodies on the wire. Projecting this count into other casualties, it would seem that Viet Minh therefore must have lost half a division in this action alone. Fact that for first time in this war Viet Minh asked for truce in which to recover their dead indicates they must have taken severe punishment. Truce lasted from dawn to noon of March 14.

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[1] Mar. 14.

HEATH

751G.00/3–1654 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT SAIGON, March 16, 1954—4 p. m.

1698. Repeated information Hanoi 274, Paris 528.

At midnight last night, the commander of American ground crew numbering 100 at Doson airfield sent flash message asking General Trapnell to get in communication with him. Trapnell was unable to establish communication until 9 a. m. this morning when he learned that last night about 10:30, a Viet Minh detachment of 400 crossed a branch of the Red River to the north of Doson and cut road from Doson to Haiphong and Cat-Bi airfield. Viet Minh were armed with machine-guns, bazookas and carried plastic mines. Contrary to expectations they did not attack Doson airfield but according to latest reports were remaining between Doson and Haiphong. American ground crew were given arms and through night did guard duty on periphery of airfield and on beach (contrary to original understanding that they would act only in defense of their own shops and area).

General Trapnell took off at 10:30 to visit Doson and instructed his deputy to inform French Chief-of-Staff that if upon his arrival he found that adequate arrangements to protect Doson airfield had not been made, he would immediately order transfer of the detachment to Tourane airfield. He reminded French Chief-of-Staff that 200 American maintenance personnel had only been sent on distinct guarantee by French that their security would be assured.

It is to be noted that maintenance detachments have had practically no combat experience and training. If it should prove desirable to evacuate detachment at Doson, there would be some difficulty, since available transport aircraft are being mainly used for supply of Dien-Bien-Phu and in support of other military operations. It is not known whether French Navy could provide craft for their transportation. There would remain problem of removing their equipment to safety. It cannot be airlifted from Doson as runway is too short for C–119s or C–54s. If road communication is re-established with Haiphong and Cat-Bi, it can be removed to Cat-Bi and thence to Tourane. It could be loaded on ships at Doson but it is doubtful if either French or American vessels could reach there before two or three days. One possibility might be for American naval craft to be despatched from Philippines to stand off Doson until situation there is clarified, but no such request is being made by MAAG at this time.[1]

HEATH

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[1] In telegram 1723 from Saigon, Mar. 18, Ambassador Heath transmitted the following additional information:

"Fortunately situation reported Embtel 1698, Hanoi 274, Paris 528 has proved not as alarming as originally indicated. General Trapnell personally visited Doson and informs me that Air Force mechanics undertook guard duty on initiative of their own commanding officer and not at French request. He further reports that French intelligence indicates doubt that Viet Minh detachment had in fact cut road from Doson to Haiphong and that at present time reported menace does not exist. However, General Trapnell has officially requested General Navarre to send an additional company to reinforce Doson garrison and is confident that this base can be held in case of future attack. Trapnell feels it essential if at all possible to maintain US mechanics at Doson since they are engaged in support of two squadrons of C–47's, and if they were withdrawn to Tourane, this would decrease availability of these essential aircraft through additional four-hour flight from Tonkin to Tourane for base repair." (751G.00/3–1854)

751G.00/3–1654 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 16, 1954—7 p. m.

1708. Repeated information Paris 530, Hanoi 276. Last week end DCM had long conversation with former Prime Minister Tam who is rusticating in Dalat. Tam said, as had his own predecessor, Huu (cf Embtel 1638 repeated Paris 506)[1] that appeal to Bao Dai for elections and a national assembly, reported Embtel 1624, repeated Paris 502, Hanoi 258,[2] must be taken seriously. He said Vietnamese people were growing increasingly restive at failure of Bao Dai to honor his promises and that Bao Dai must pay heed to this popular demand if he were to remain in control of the situation.

Tam conceded, however, that it would be difficult to start elective processes or hold national assembly prior to Geneva conference and that any attempt to hurry up an assembly would be met by Communist propaganda charges that this was but a maneuver to give a democratic gloss to a Vietnam which in reality was dominated by French and a puppet emperor. However, Tam said that if Ho Chi Minh is to be represented at Geneva conference table he can point to fact of elections within Viet Minh zone and existence of Viet Minh popular assembly, while Buu Loc or Bao Dai at Geneva could point to no constitutional accomplishment at all. As a minimum, Tam felt that some benefit might be achieved if Bao Dai could at least announce a fixed date for the holding of elections and if this announcement could be made before the Geneva conference opens.

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[1] Dated Mar. 10, p. 1100.

[2] See footnote 1, p. 1102.

Tam said significantly, "unless we hold elections soon, you will find that when they are eventually held, there will be more and more Viet Minh voting".

HEATH

751G.00/3–1654 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, March 16, 1954—3 p. m.

493. Sent Saigon 388, repeated information Department 493. This is joint Consulate–STEM Hanoi message.

As result Viet Minh attacks in recent weeks on three North Vietnam air fields, General Navarre has ordered evacuation of villages in immediate vicinity of airports of Bauhmai, Gialam, Catbi, and Voson. Governor Tri has resisted this move on grounds that Viet Minh commando teams which have carried out raids were not based in or aided by villages in question, and that such wholesale evacuation will provide Viet Minh with ready-made and damaging propaganda material. However, Governor has been obliged to yield to military decision, and finds himself faced with crushing burden of relocating and providing some means of livelihood for upward of 50,000 new and unanticipated refugees.

French Army will pay indemnity of only 400 to 600 piastres per household, and that only after long delay following approval in Paris. Tri believes any approximately satisfactory solution to problem will involve expenditure of 1,000 piastres per capita, or total of 50 million piastres. Plans have not yet been worked out to effect resettlement and will probably involve different types of solutions for different villages: That is, possible new refugee villages in certain cases, and cash payment in others in order permit refugees find homes in already existing villages. USOM representative North Vietnam is being kept abreast of plans as they develop.

Governor Tri plans present this problem to National Aid Committee at its meeting of March 22. We urge that country team Saigon explore all possible means of lending effective support to this emergency request.[1]

STURM

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[1] In telegram 1689 to Saigon, Mar. 17 (sent to Hanoi as telegram 530), the Department of State indicated that the situation appeared to offer the opportunity for U.S. aid to make a timely and effective contribution. (751G.00/3–1654) In telegram 1756 from Saigon, Mar. 21, the Embassy reported that the country team had decided that FOA should provide aid, but that the United States should avoid identification with the relocation program. (751G.00/3–2154)

751G.00/3–1754 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY HANOI, March 17, 1954—10 a. m.

495. Repeated information Saigon 390, Paris 206. Paris limit distribution. Commissioner General De Jean said in private interview last night that everything possible will be done to hold Dien-Bien-Phu, and that he feels relatively confident of outcome. De Jean said that battle now in progress is "the crucial engagement of the war": if the defenders hold out, as he hopes and believes they will, they have an excellent chance of breaking the three best Viet Minh infantry divisions, 308th, 312th, and 316th, plus heavy Division 351st. If, on the other hand, French are overwhelmed at Dien-Bien-Phu, the political repercussions, both in Vietnam and in France, will be disastrous, even though loss in French Union troops would be only 12 battalions.[1] De Jean believes Viet Minh decision to attack Dien-Bien-Phu was almost wholly political, that new phase of greatly expanded Viet Minh activity throughout Vietnam was decided upon by Viet Minh high command after date had been set for Geneva conference, and that this activity is aimed at obtaining for Viet Minh most favorable possible position in which to enter Geneva conference.

Describing action in which two northernmost strong points at Dien-Bien-Phu were over-run by Viet Minh, De Jean said that before "Gabrielle," which had been excellently defended for two days by one Algerian battalion, there lay 2,000 Viet Minh dead after engagement, while in front of "Beatrix," manned by Foreign Legion battalion which had misfortune lose its commanding officer at beginning of battle, 1,000 Viet Minh dead were observed. About 250 men from these two battalions have been recovered. French Union losses were particularly heavy in artillerymen. Two new battalions were parachuted into Dien-Bien-Phu yesterday.

Using wounded French officer as messenger, Viet Minh asked for six-hour truce to remove dead and wounded between six a. m. and noon morning March 15. Question was referred to General Cogny in Hanoi, who hesitated but finally agreed, in part because Viet Minh dead in barbed wire were masking the fire of his automatic weapons.

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[1] In telegram 1744 from Saigon, Mar. 19, Ambassador Heath stated the following: "Dejean, in his conversation with me last night, indicated confidence that Dien Bien Phu would be held. He was in particular heartened by report of General Bodet, who returned to Saigon yesterday afternoon, that Laniel's Government was firmly in support of decision taken by Navarre and Dejean to hold Dien Bien Phu at all cost. Dejean, in fact contrary to remark reported second [*third?*] sentence Hanoi's telegram 495, repeated information Saigon 390, Paris 206, told me that he felt Dien Bien Phu would galvanize French public opinion and strengthen present precarious balance in Parliament from present 'two-fifths against and three-fifths for' to a much more impressive majority favoring determined prosecution of war." (751G.00/3–1954)

Night of March 15 to 16 all quiet, as both sides worked all night moving out dead and wounded. Meanwhile, Viet Minh were apparently repositioning their artillery for assault on central defenses of Dien-Bien-Phu which began to come under fire yesterday afternoon. Reconnaissance from southernmost strong point "Isabelle" made contact with enemy at 800 meters.

De Jean deplored small number of combat aircraft available to aid in defense of Dien-Bien-Phu, saying France should have sent three times as many airmen here and should have asked US for three times as much aviation matériel. If enough combat aircraft were available, he said, it would be possible knock out Viet Minh artillery, break up attack formations, and eventually prevent any orderly withdrawal.

Commissioner General believes that Viet Minh will not delay, but will seek a decision at Dien-Bien-Phu before this week is over.

STURM

711.551/3–1554 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, March 17, 1954—6:13 p. m.

1691. Limit distribution. Your 1687.[2] General O'Daniel currently plans arrive Saigon about April 12. This delay should give time for French reaction reported reftel to subside. Public statements here are currently to effect O'Daniel is routine replacement for Trapnell with no change in MAAG terms of reference. Department will take up point made penultimate paragraph yourtel with appropriate Defense Department officials. At same time, Department is confident that you will be able restore sense of proportion our French friends this whole matter. While O'Daniels assignment does not involve question of US participation in any phase Indochina war, French aware US military authorities have had extensive and largely successful experience in modern warfare. Notably they have been able through training methods and otherwise to convert ROK army into first-class fighting machine. Korean conditions it is realized are perhaps not identic those in Indochina. Nevertheless Department believes French should continue maintain receptive and sympathetic attitude toward suggestions and advice emanating from our side.

Basis for Franco-American cooperation this matter was recognized in exchange of notes last September (see Paris Embassy Despatch 938, October 2 repeated AmEmbassy Saigon[3]) establishing French Government's obligation to take into consideration US views "with respect to the development and carrying out of French strategic plans without in any way of course detracting from exclusive French responsibility for adoption and execution thereof."

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.

[2] Dated Mar. 15, p. 1120.

[3] For the exchange of letters of Sept. 29, 1953, texts of which were transmitted to Washington in despatch 938 of Oct. 2, see p. 812.

Department can appreciate French sensitivities particularly in view unfortunate publicity and handling this matter. On the other hand, it would be deplorable if these sensitivities were to prevent US making maximum contribution to success this vital and difficult enterprise.

DULLES

Editorial Note

At his news conference of March 17, 1954, President Eisenhower responded to questions concerning the possibility of the outbreak of general war occurring as the outgrowth of a situation like Indochina, the response of the United States should large-scale aggression take place, and the status of the military situation in Indochina. For the record of the news conference, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, pages 320–332.

751G.00/3–1854 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, March 18, 1954—11 a. m.

500. Sent Saigon 395; repeated information Department 500. Reference Saigon telegram sent Hanoi 277 repeated information Department 1710.[1] Governor Tri believes it would be very difficult for Bao Dai or Buu-Loc government to take any meaningful steps to counteract adverse domestic effects of factors listed in reference telegram until and unless it is possible to present to people of Vietnam convincing documentary evidence that they have in fact regained their complete independence. He is himself (and he states that most persons with whom he is [in] contact here share his feeling) profoundly discouraged by turn which Franco-Vietnamese negotiations have taken in Paris. Tri accepts Commissioner General De Jean's assurance that most questions of substance have been resolved. He is all the more distressed for that reason to observe how much time is being wasted over questions of form, and

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[1] The reference telegram read as follows: "For next few days it will be difficult for me to come to Hanoi as I had planned. Would appreciate your ideas and those of Governor Tri and other qualified observors Hanoi as to what measures of internal effect might be taken by Bao Dai and Buu Loc Government in view of such events as French Parliamentary attitude in favor of a negotiated peace, the action of certain southern nationalists demanding early elections to a National Assembly and the forthcoming conference at Geneva." (751G.00/3–1654)

how unwilling French are to give solemn recognition in a suitable document to Vietnam's independence, particularly at a time when Frenchmen in high places call openly for a negotiated settlement with Viet Minh.

Tri recognizes that French Government may have legitimate scruples about surrendering full political authority here to a government "without roots in the people" (a point brought sharply home to Paris Cabinet by recent activities centering about movement for national coalition and peace). However, French should be satisfied on this point by appropriate guarantees that elections will be held as soon as practicable, and authority turned over to resulting government.

Assuming Vietnamese independence is established in suitable manner, Tri believes it is indispensable at earliest moment set up some kind of national assembly. As general elections are out of the question for time being, Tri thinks it desirable to adopt National Congress of last October as foundation for this assembly, incorporating new members as necessary. He believes that if elections were held, majority of National Congress members would be chosen for new assembly in any case. Tri would not grant assembly legislative powers demanded by coalition, but would, nevertheless, endow it with wide consultative powers and assure it opportunity for debate on all major governmental issues.

Tri remains convinced that there is no real possibility of acceptable negotiated settlement either with Viet Minh separately or with Communist bloc at Geneva. He believes, moreover, that most discerning Vietnamese and French share this view. If Vietnamese independence is given appropriate expression at Paris, he feels that Vietnamese Government can thereafter formulate its position, which to be tenable must be firmly backed by US, in opposition to any surrender, however disguised, to the Viet Minh. In adopting such a stand, Buu-Loc government would reflect the wishes of an overwhelming majority of non-Communist Vietnamese. Government cannot, however, do more than go through the motions unless Vietnamese independence is worthily proclaimed and US can be counted on to prevent any sell-out, at Geneva or elsewhere.

Comment: Above statement appears as reasonable to me as any that can be made from here at this time, pending outcome of battle at Dien-Bien-Phu. While political factors have temporarily taken second place in thinking of most people here, it is indisputable that unless problems stated by Governor Tri are solved, Vietnamese and their government will continue have plausible excuses for their failure make significant contribution to cause of free world. While to solve these problems will not in itself instill distinguished performance by

Vietnamese, to ignore them will assure temporary continuance of an unsatisfactory *status quo*, followed by further deterioration.

STURM

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 189th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 18, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

The following were present at the 189th meeting of the Council: The President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; Mr. Kyes for the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General (for Items 2 and 3); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Civil Service Commission (for Item 3); the Chairman, Federal Communications Commission (for Item 4); Admiral Carney for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Mr. Cutler and Mr. Jackson, Special Assistants to the President; Ralph N. Stohl and John G. Connell, Jr., Department of Defense (for Item 3); Gen. Porter, Foreign Operations Administration (for Item 4); the NSC Representative on Internal Security; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

. . . .

5. *Significant world developments affecting U.S. security*

The Director of Central Intelligence, referring to a detailed map of the battle area at Dien Bien Phu, indicated that as of March 13 the Vietminh had lost the equivalent of five battalions in battle, the French of two battalions, which, however, had been largely replaced. It was impossible to predict the eventual outcome, since the French Union forces were still outnumbered by more than two to one. The latest information from G–2 was that the French had about a 50–50 chance of holding out.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Mar. 19.

The President inquired whether the French were making good use of the planes which were available to them, and whether they were using napalm against the enemy artillery battalions which were shelling the airfields. The President further commented that in the present circumstances it was difficult for him to understand General Navarre's earlier statements hoping that he would be attacked by the enemy at Dien Bien Phu since he was sure of defeating them. Moreover, the President commented that the odds of two to one in numbers were not really very heavily against the French, in view of the fact that they were fighting from prepared and heavily fortified positions.

Mr. Dulles suggested that the pessimistic French reports from Saigon might be designed as a build-up to exaggerate the extent of their final victory.

Governor Stassen inquired whether the present operation did not constitute the biggest military commitment that the Vietminh had made to date in the Indochina war. Mr. Dulles replied in the affirmative, and said that the whole operation was obviously a Vietminh preparation for the Geneva Conference.

Secretary Dulles added that while he was at Berlin he had warned Bidault, on the basis of American experience in Korea, that if Indochina were put on the agenda for the Geneva Conference it would be the signal for violent Vietminh attacks on the French Union forces in Indochina. This was precisely what had happened.

. . . .

651.51G/3–1954

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 19, 1954.

Participants: Admiral Radford
Mr. Murphy, G
Mr. MacArthur, C

Following the State–JCS meeting this morning, Admiral Radford asked Mr. Murphy and Mr. MacArthur to join him in his office for a few moments.

He said General Ely was arriving in Washington tomorrow to discuss Indochina. General Valluy, who had been called back to Paris, had returned to Washington yesterday and had seen Admiral Radford this morning. Although Admiral Radford had only seen General Valluy briefly, General Valluy had indicated that General Ely would tell Admiral Radford and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was the conclusion of the French authorities that victory could not be obtained in Indochina in 1954 or 1955 and that France could only carry on the campaign in 1956 if the U.S. contributed military forces to the Indochina campaign. It was not clear whether this represented the views of the French military or the French Government, but it may well reflect the views of Pleven and some other members of the French Government.

General Valluy had also seen M. Bidault while he was in Paris, who had asked that a personal message from him be passed by Valluy to Admiral Radford to the effect that M. Bidault intended to hold the line at Geneva so that negotiations would not be terminated there but would be strung out. (*Note* by Mr. MacArthur: It is not clear exactly what this means, but presumably it indicates that the French will not be able to have a clean break if they hold the line at Geneva and that some form of French negotiations with the Communists or possibility thereof will have to continue after the Geneva Conference.)

Editorial Note

The President's appointment book indicates that at 9:30 a. m., March 20, 1954, President Eisenhower held an "off the record" meeting at the White House with the following individuals: John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State; Charles E. Wilson, Secretary of Defense; Allen Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence; Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Department of State. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments") The diary of James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President, presumably citing the same session, states that the President met with Secretary Dulles, Secretary Wilson, and Admiral Radford for 1½ hours on the morning of March 20 on the subject of Indochina.

The Hagerty diary entry of March 20 also indicates that another meeting was slated for the following day. (Eisenhower Library, James C. Hagerty papers) The President's appointment book confirms that another "off the record" meeting did occur at 12:16 p. m., March 21, with the following individuals in attendance: Secretary Dulles, Secretary Wilson, Allen Dulles, Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield, and MacArthur. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments")

No records of the White House meetings of March 20 and 21, 1954, have been found in Department of State files or at the Eisenhower Library.

751G.00/3-2054 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, March 20, 1954—5 p. m.

1752. Repeated information Paris 548, Tokyo 50, Manila 161, Singapore 41. Situation at Dien Bien Phu is still fairly quiet. This morning Navarre's Chief of Staff showed DCM battle plan with developments up to midnight. Gambiez anticipates an all-out Viet-Minh attack on position "Isabelle" whose artillery fire of 105's zeroed-in in support of main redoubt has proved unusually galling to enemy. Furthermore, "Isabelle" is isolated from main center of resistance at southern end of drop zone. It is defended by three battalions, in one of which Gambiez' only son serves.[1]

Gambiez said that Viet-Minh were now in some force in portions of drop zone between central defensive positions and "Isabelle". They had likewise undertaken some entrenching activity to west of "Isabelle". An attack had been expected nightly, but he thought present bright moon was reason for enemy having deferred his onslaught. Gambiez said that, as a former commando himself, he would prefer some hours of darkness in order to advance his troops before taking off against "Isabelle".

On broader aspects of battle of Dien Bien Phu, Gambiez said that no one had any illusions as to its primary political importance. He described Navarre as being convinced that if French [lost?] Dien Bien Phu, political repercussions, particularly in France, would be disastrous. Navarre pointed out, however, that from purely military aspect, even if he lost all twelve battalions, his capacity to remain in Indochina war would not be greatly impaired, and even if he lost his twelve battalions at Dien Bien Phu, price paid by enemy would be so heavy that at best Viet-Minh could but win a Pyhrric victory. Naturally, if French won at Dien Bien Phu, Giap would have suffered such losses in trained regulars as practically to put him out of fight.

Gambiez expressed personal opinion that Dien Bien Phu would have decisive influence on US thinking re future developments in south-east Asia. He mentioned specifically possibility of US giving up Indochina and forming its main line of resistance to communist advance in Burma and Thailand. DCM told Navarre's Chief of Staff with great emphasis that US Government firmly believed that Indochina must be held at all cost and that explained very tangible efforts of US to sustain Navarre in his war plan.

HEATH

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[1] In telegram 515 from Hanoi, Mar. 24, Sturm reported that the son of the general had been killed in the crash of a helicopter shot down while evacuating wounded. (751G.00/3-2454)

751G.00/3–2054

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 20, 1954.

Subject: Franco–Vietnamese Operations along Coast of Central Viet-Nam

General Navarre has continued to carry out his scheduled operation to retake certain areas in Central Viet-Nam during this fighting season, in spite of Viet-Minh attacks in North Viet-Nam and Laos.

On January 20, he carried out an amphibious operation near Tuy Hoa (see map attached)[2] and has since made a second landing on March 13 to the north at Qui Nhon. The large area now under friendly control has been occupied by the Viet-Minh for the last seven years and was an important source of food and manpower for them. Reports indicate the population is essentially friendly and that the units of the Viet-Nam National Army who are holding the area are well received although the population had been threatened with Viet-Minh reprisals if they cooperated with the liberating forces.

Relief activities, which are being supported by FOA, and the establishment of civil government are said to constitute an effective and valuable demonstration of the Vietnamese Government's ability with French Union manpower not only to overthrow Viet-Minh control of target areas, but to establish effective administration at such places. USIA has cooperated with the operation and has prepared numerous pamphlets for distribution.

General Navarre plans to continue his progressive occupation of central Viet-Nam and expects to clear the coastal area up to Tourane by the summer of 1954. It is encouraging to see the steady progress of this phase of the "Navarre Plan" and the success with which it has met, despite Viet-Minh attacks in other parts of Viet-Nam.[3]

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[1] Drafted by Hoey of PSA.

[2] Not reproduced.

[3] The following handwritten notation by Robertson appears on the source text: "Amen and thank you."

751G.00/3–2154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SAIGON, March 21, 1954—10 a. m.

1753. Repeated information Paris 549, Tokyo 51, Manila 162. Last night (March 19) Navarre's Chief of Staff telephoned DCM to say on behalf of Navarre and French General Staff how impressed and appreciative they were of General Trapnell and MAAG, Saigon. Gambiez said "In the past three days MAAG has done the impossible". This morning in conversation he elaborated and said that every major request made by French since battle of Dien Bien Phu had been met with a celerity and efficiency which was unparalleled in warfare.

I desire that this official commendation of General Trapnell and his staff be incorporated in their records with the Department of Defense.

HEATH

751G.00/3-2154

Memorandum for the Record by Captain G. W. Anderson, USN, Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford)[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 21 March 1954.

Subject: Conversations with General Paul Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff on the subject of Indo-China.[2]

Conversations with General Paul Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff, on the subject of Indo-China were initiated on the evening of Saturday, 20 March, at a private dinner at the quarters of Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. In attendance at this dinner, in addition to Admiral Radford, were:

Vice President Nixon
The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency,
  Mr. Allen Dulles
Chief of Staff of the Army, General Ridgway
Mr. Douglas MacArthur II, of the State Department
General Ely
General Valluy, the French Mission to the United States
Colonel Boron [*Brohon*], Assistant to General Ely
Captain Anderson, Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Lt. Colonel Cocke, U.S. Army interpreter.

Admiral Radford opened the discussions by welcoming General Ely to the United States, stressing the importance of his current mission to the success of the Free World in combating the menace of Communism in Indo-China. He stressed the hope that General Ely would feel absolutely free to be utterly frank in discussing the current situation, and stating in exact terms his view of what should be done to insure the denial of Indo-China to the Communists. General Ely agreed that it was necessary and appropriate to be absolutely forthright in facing this issue.

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[1] Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Department of State, a participant at this meeting, transmitted copies of this memorandum to Deputy Under Secretary of State Murphy and Bonsal of PSA under notes of transmittal dated Mar. 22.

[2] For General Ely's account of his conversations in Washington, Mar. 20–25, see Paul Ely, *Mémoires: L'Indochine dans la tourmente* (Paris, Plon, 1964), pp. 59–81. For Admiral Radford's memoir account, see *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam*, pp. 391–401.

The first facet of the problem which was discussed involved the current attitude in France towards the war in Indo-China. In response to a question by the Vice President, General Ely indicated that there was no doubt that the people of France were weary of the war in Indo-China and its drain on the resources of France, even as were the people of the United States with respect to the termination of hostilities in Korea. This feeling, of course, stemmed from the length of the conflict, the attitude of certain defeatist elements, and the deliberate provocation of such feelings by the Communists. It is probable that the newspaper reports exaggerate in some degree this defeatist sentiment. This particular feeling was not, however, shared by the present government of France, which was determined not to capitulate to the Communists. The true attitude of the French Government has been stated recently by Mr. Laniel, who had set forth the only conditions which would be acceptable to France for a termination of hostilities, and which would involve maintaining the honor of the French Expeditionary Corps. There was no doubt that the particular situation at Dien Bien Phu was being closely followed in France and that the outcome of this battle would have a marked effect on French public opinion. A victory for France at Dien Bien Phu would greatly enhance morale and determination. Conversely, a major defeat would have serious adverse effects.

The discussion then shifted to the question of native leadership in Viet Nam. The Vice President asked General Ely his opinion of Bao Dai, indicating that in his opinion Bao Dai has potentialities to be, in reality, a suitable leader for his people, but that up to the present time he had not exercised effective leadership. It was agreed in general by General Ely that Bao Dai did have suitable qualifications to lead and inspire his people, and that his position as Emperor was a suitable symbol of leadership in addition to his personal qualifications. General Ely indicated that General Navarre was endeavoring to get Bao Dai to take a more aggressive attitude and actually to demonstrate his leadership by public appearances before his people and his armed forces. It was the general consensus that there was not in evidence at this time any other potential leader of Viet Nam.

General Ely then proceeded to outline the situation in Indo-China in which he emphasized that political factors were of great importance. There was no question that the Government of France stood by the July 3rd declaration in which the independence of Viet Nam within the French Union would be guaranteed. General Ely was optimistic over the outcome of discussions presently being conducted in Paris with the representatives of Viet Nam working towards the implementation of the July 3rd declaration. Progress on the military front was definitely related to ability to achieve success on the political front in order to obtain the full support of the local populace against the Communists. For example, many villages which had been liberated from the domination of the military forces of the Viet Minh would revert to Viet Minh control after the French Union military forces had moved on to engage the Communists in other localities. General Ely indicated that maintenance of suitable control and the pacification of areas from which the Communist military forces had been eliminated was a very difficult problem which had not yet been solved.

General Ely then focused attention on the military situation at Dien Bien Phu. He indicated the strategic purpose of General Navarre in establishing the French strong point at Dien Bien Phu. This involved the establishment of a strong air ground position at a road communication center carefully selected to give protection to Laos. Maintenance of a French strong point in this location required the Communists to concentrate their battle corps against it relieving pressure on the Delta area. The French position at Dien Bien Phu had served to negate the effectiveness of Viet Minh operations directed against Luang Prabang and penetrations into Laos. The French, indeed, had a strong position at Dien Bien Phu but the Communists had concentrated the major portion of their battle corps against it and had gone to extreme measures to build up large supplies of ammunition. Support from the Chinese Communists approaching 4000 tons per month has enabled this build up. The current assault on Dien Bien Phu by the Viet Minh forces was undoubtedly for the purpose of achieving a major *political* victory to influence public opinion in France and designed to afford the Communists a position of strength from which to negotiate at Geneva. The Communists have taken very high losses already to achieve this success. The French still hold Dien Bien Phu. We could not yet judge how high a price the Viet Minh were prepared to pay for Dien Bien Phu. In General Ely's mind this price would be so high that the Viet Minh would, in fact, lose the military effectiveness of their battle corps in achieving success, whereas even if the French lost Dien Bien Phu, the French Union forces would have lost only about 5% of their own combat forces in Indo-China. The losses to the Viet Minh would proportionately be very heavy. Therefore, in reality a military defeat was in prospect for the Viet Minh regardless of the outcome of Dien Bien Phu. On the other hand, General Ely fully recognized the serious political consequences of the outcome of this battle. In response to questions, General Ely indicated that the most serious deficiency of the French forces in connection with Dien Bien Phu was in the air. He indicated that there was urgent need for more combat type aircraft. He judged that the prospects for the French holding out at Dien Bien Phu were 50–50 at this time. Therefore, one could recognize the great political importance attached to the success of the French Union forces at Dien Bien Phu.

Covering the military situation elsewhere in Indo-China, General Ely indicated that operations in South Viet Nam were proceeding in accordance with General Navarre's plan. He touched only lightly on the situation in the Delta area where Communist operations were causing the French considerable difficulty. General Ely indicated that a military solution in Indo-China was not to be expected in 1954 or 1955.

General Ely indicated that he had with him a detailed list of the most urgent requirements of General Navarre for additional material assistance from the United States. These were being submitted to the U.S. Military Aid Group in Indo-China but General Ely would provide a statement of these needs during his visit. The most urgent item was one for 800 type G–12 parachutes required for the continued support by air of the forces at Dien Bien Phu. He also stated that the French needed 40 more B–26 aircraft for which they would have flight crews by the first of April. He emphasized that the greatest military deficiency was in offensive air forces.

In response to a question by Mr. Dulles, General Ely indicated that General Navarre was fully aware of the importance of guerrilla operations and was proceeding to improve his capabilities in this field. Such forces were in operation in the northern part of Indo-China. He attributed the success of the Viet Minh in this field to the fact that they were waging a politico-military struggle. The French Union forces lacked the political support of the mass of the people.

The discussion was terminated at this point.

Editorial Note

The diary of James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President, indicates that at 8 a. m., March 22, 1954, prior to a more general conference between the President and Congressional leaders at the White House, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, briefed a restricted number of unnamed leaders on the Indochina situation. Radford reported that the French were in a dangerous position and needed more B–26 bombers, and that the Viet Minh were attempting to win a victory before the Geneva Conference but were suffering heavy losses. (Eisenhower Library, James C. Hagerty papers) No other record of this session has been found.

The President's appointment book indicates that at 10:30 a. m., March 22, President Eisenhower met with Admiral Radford and General Paul Ely, Chairman of the French Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the White House. Admiral Radford had asked if he might bring in General Ely to meet with the President. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments") The Hagerty diary also mentions this meeting. (Eisenhower Library, James C. Hagerty papers) No record of the meeting has been found in Department of State files or at the Eisenhower Library.

751G.00/3–2354

Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President [1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 23, 1954.

Subject: Indochina Situation

Admiral Radford brought to see me today General Ely and General Valluy. Also, the Chargé d'Affaires of the French Embassy, Mr. Daridan, was present.

In the course of the conversation, General Ely stated that he was submitting a written question to the United States Government asking an answer whether, if the Chinese Communists sent jet fighters into Indochina, the United States would take steps to combat them in the air with its own air force.

I said that I would not, of course, attempt to answer that question. I did, however, think it appropriate to remind our French friends that if the United States sent its flag and its own military establishment—land, sea or air—into the Indochina war, then the prestige of the United States would be engaged to a point where we would want to have a success. We could not afford thus to engage the prestige of the United States and suffer a defeat which would have worldwide repercussions.

I said that if the French wanted our open participation in the Indochina war, I thought that they ought also to consider that this might involve a greater degree of partnership than had prevailed up to the present time, notably in relation to independence for the Associated States and the training of indigenous forces.

Mr. Daridan asked just what kind of an arrangement I had in mind. I said I did not have any particular arrangement in mind and was not proposing any negotiation. I was merely raising certain broad considerations of principle which perhaps should be in the background of our thinking and planning.

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[1] A handwritten notation on the source text indicates that this memorandum was delivered to the White House on Mar. 23. The text, with the exception of the last sentence, was transmitted to Paris in telegram 3277 of Mar. 23, for the Ambassador's eyes only from the Secretary. Ambassador Dillon was advised that this information was being held very closely in Washington and was for his information only. The telegram was repeated for information to Saigon as 1751. (751G.5/3–2354)

I am having prepared a full memorandum of the conversation.[2] The foregoing covers the high points.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

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[2] *Infra.*

751G.00/3–2354

Memorandum of Conversation, by William R. Tyler of the Office of Western European Affairs[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 23, 1954.

Subject: Visit of General Ely with the Secretary.

Participants: The Secretary
Mr. MacArthur, C
Admiral Radford, JCS
Lt. Col. Cocke, OSD NATO
Mr. Bonsal, PSA
Mr. Tyler, WE
General Ely
General Valluy
M. Daridan, Chargé d'Affaires, French Embassy

General Ely started the conversation by telling the Secretary how much he appreciated this opportunity of calling on him and telling him how grateful he was for the courtesy and understanding which he had experienced in the course of his present visit. The Secretary said that he was glad to welcome General Ely and that, as he knew, everyone here had the situation in Indochina very much in mind, and in particular the present siege at Dien-Bien-Phu. The Secretary expressed the admiration which he and everyone felt for the gallant garrison.

General Ely then gave an account of the military situation at Dien-Bien-Phu. He said that it was quite evident that the Viet Minh were out to reap political advantages before the Geneva Conference by taking Dien-Bien-Phu, if possible, at any price. He said that it was quite clear that the military value of Dien-Bien-Phu was not such as to justify the tremendous military power which had been brought to bear against it or the equally great sacrifices which the Viet Minh had already expended in attempting to take it. He said he could not predict the outcome of the current fighting and qualified the situation as being serious but not critical as of now. General Ely said that the Viet Minh had only captured the two outposts which they now hold at tremendous sacrifices amounting to about 6,000 men. He had this very morning received the news that the Viet Minh are continuing to reinforce and bring up to strength the losses in men that they have suffered and that they are receiving constant supplies of ammunition from China itself in this process of reinforcement. He said that bad weather had originally hampered the defense of the Fort but that clear weather of late had enabled the French aviation to harass the besiegers effectively. General Ely said in conclusion that at the end of his recent visit to Indochina with the French Defense Minister, M. Pleven, both had been in complete agreement that the primary factor in Indochina was not so much the military, as the political aspect. He said that the latter was of priority significance and importance in the attainment of a solution of the problem in that area.

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[1] For a shorter memorandum of this conversation prepared by the Secretary of State, see *supra*.

The Secretary said he was not surprised that the Viet Minh had committed such strong military forces to try to achieve a dramatic victory even at great cost to itself, just as the North Koreans had attempted to do shortly before the armistice in Korea. He had forecast that to Bidault at Berlin. The Secretary said that the United States wished to help France in Indochina by furnishing such matériel assistance as was appropriate and usable.

Admiral Radford agreed with the estimate of the situation as presented by General Ely and said that he had been very recently in communication with General Trapnell in Indochina. There did not seem to be, said Admiral Radford, anything much that could be done effectively with regard to increased aid to Dien-Bien-Phu within the next three or four days. However he had given orders that some C–119s could undertake napalm bombing. Due to their freight-carrying capacity these aircraft could launch big containers which would burn out a considerable area and help to reveal enemy artillery positions. General Ely agreed that this could be a helpful development.

General Ely then asked the Secretary if he could give him any indication of what the United States would do if MIGs were to intervene in the Indochina fighting. He pointed out that they could only come from South China, since there are no airfields in the area of Indochina controlled by the Viet Minh which are capable of jet fighters. Their presence would therefore signify direct Chinese intervention. Admiral Radford commented that the only planes we have which could be put against MIGs would be F–86s.

The Secretary said that he would not attempt to give an answer now to a question of this importance involving so many factors. He did wish, however, to point out that the issue raised by General Ely was one of extreme importance. If once the United States were to engage itself in actual fighting in the war in Indochina it would thereby create a situation from which it would not be easy for it to withdraw. Therefore, such a development would have to be looked at in terms of the factors necessary to assure a military success and to sustain the prestige of the United States throughout the world. The Secretary said the United States would hesitate to participate in the fighting in Indochina on the basis of uncertainty as to the political relations necessary for a successful outcome. The United States felt that both on the political and military plane, it was necessary to consider something of a partnership-relationship to assure that the patriotic participation of the local population, and its most effective military mobilization and training, could be assured.

General Ely asked whether the Secretary's remarks should be taken to imply that he did not have sufficient confidence in the French military command in Indochina. In reply, the Secretary recalled that the United States had had considerable experience in Greece and Korea which might be useful in training the Vietnam [*Vietnamese*]. He stressed that the factors he had mentioned would have to be taken into consideration by the Government of the United States in reaching a decision on the point raised by General Ely. M. Daridan observed that he felt that there were not many traces of colonialism left in Indochina and that France was doing all it could to give that area its independence. M. Daridan then asked the Secretary whether in the event of intervention by MIGs, the decision as to retaliation against Communist China would be subject to consideration of the factors which the Secretary had just mentioned. The Secretary said that he did not desire to undertake now a "negotiation", and that the conversation had gone on as far as was useful on this subject. The meeting then came to an end.

751G.00/3–2354

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Jones) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 23, 1954.

Subject: Conversations between JCS and General Ely

We were informed at the Pentagon yesterday that General Ely in his discussions with the JCS has stuck very close to specific military problems. Officers of the JCS have come to the conclusion that General Ely has very narrow terms of reference from the French Government which permit him to talk only about certain specific military requirements and do not permit him to touch on broad political questions. Specifically, he has apparently dodged all questions on US troop participation in Indochina and on French plans in the event that peace is not obtained at Geneva.

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[1] Drafted by Robert H. McBride, the Officer in Charge of French-Iberian Affairs.

According to the JCS representatives, General Ely, as reported in the *Washington Post* this morning, has stressed the lack of spare parts for aircraft as the most urgent requirement in the Indochina theatre. He has presented the JCS with a list of specific shortages. He has stated that this shortage is even more critical than the need for additional aircraft, while the personnel situation is now well in hand. According to people in the Pentagon a few of these items have not been shipped in sufficient quantity and prompt remedial steps will be taken. In other cases our figures simply do not jibe with those of the French and our people strongly maintain that sufficient stocks have in fact been sent. In any event Admiral Radford has ordered a thorough investigation made into this problem on an urgent basis.

In addition General Ely has of course made a strong plea not only for the additional squadron of B–26's but for another squadron of F–8–F's (Navy fighters). A third requirement is said to be additional C–47's at a later date. However this requirement is said not to be nearly so urgent as that for the B–26's and F–8–F's. In addition General Ely has presented a request for 4000-pound fragmentation bombs. According to the JCS representative the French have never asked for this item before and our people hardly see how they could use them. Nevertheless, a study will be made of this problem too.

According to the JCS representatives, Admiral Radford discussed with General Ely the possibility of assigning certain US officers to Indochina to assist in training Vietnamese troops in order to release French field grade officers for field commands, and to relieve this critical French shortage. Apparently General Ely replied that the French Government was aware of this shortage of field grade officers and that an additional unspecified number had very recently been sent from France. Accordingly he did not believe that the carrying out of the US suggestion was necessary.

PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 23, 1954.

Subject: G–2 Estimate on Level and Character of Present Chinese Communist Military Aid to the Viet Minh.

Chinese Communist military assistance to the Viet Minh currently falls into three general categories, viz., matériel, advisory (staff and technical), and training. Shipments of military matériel and supplies during 1953 averaged about 750 tons per month or approximately 50 percent above the level achieved in 1952. Over half of these shipments consisted of POL and automotive supplies, the remainder being divided among ammunition, weapons, and signal and quartermaster type items. In addition, it is estimated that about 2,000 tons of food per month currently are being shipped to the Viet Minh from China for military use. In the realm of advisory assistance, Chinese Communist advisers are believed to function at division level and in the staff sections of the High Command. Their presence in specialized units (signal, engineer, artillery, antiaircraft artillery, and transportation) is considered probable. The total number probably does not exceed 2,000. Occasional visits to Viet Minh areas by Soviet "missions" have been reported, but not confirmed. Training of Viet Minh cadres, both political and military, apparently continues on a reduced scale in South China. Previously there was evidence that considerable numbers of Viet Minh regular troops, in battalion and regimental units, received training in South China. Technical personnel and small specialized units may also receive training in South China from time to time.

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[1] A handwritten notation indicates that this memorandum was used as background by the Secretary of State for his Overseas Press Club Speech of Mar. 29; regarding that address, see the second editorial note, p. 1181.

PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Asia"

Memorandum by Charles C. Stelle of the Policy Planning Staff[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 23, 1954.

Importance of Southeast Asia

1. *Importance of Indochina*

The importance of Indochina derives primarily from the impact which its loss would have on the non-communist countries of Southeast Asia. Strategically, Communist conquest of the Tonkin Delta would open to the Communists the most feasible routes for any massive southward advance toward Southern Indochina and Thailand. Communist acquisition of Indochina would expose Thailand to communist infiltration, severe political pressures, and the threat of direct attack. The traditional propensity of the Siamese ruling group to accommodate to superior power (as was the case in their turnover to Japan during the last war) added to the difficulties which the Thais would have with their sizeable Chinese minority would make it almost certain that, unless there were direct U.S. military intervention, Thailand would shortly accommodate itself to international communism. The present Burmese situation is so precarious that Communist victory in Indochina and Communist pressures on Thailand would undoubtedly move the Burmese from their present position of fearful neutralism to one of active cooperation with the Communists. Communist victories would impel large numbers of the Chinese half of the Malayan population to move off of the fence onto the Chinese Communists side and would so severely increase the present British difficulties in dealing with Communist guerrillas that it would be doubtful if the British would be able to hang on in Malaya. Communist successes on the mainland would undoubtedly increase the already considerable strength of the Communist position in Indonesia and that country, too, could be expected to move into the Communist orbit.

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[1] A handwritten notation on the source text indicates that this memorandum was used by the Secretary of State as background for his Overseas Press Club Speech of Mar. 29; regarding that address, see the second editorial note, p. 1181.

2. *Political and Prestige Importance*

Southeast Asia is now the one place in the world where the Communist and non-Communist worlds confront each other on the field of battle in major hostilities. The outcome of the struggle will have major repercussions. Communist conquest or acquisition of Southeast Asia would spread doubt and fear among other threatened non-Communist countries and create the feeling that Communism was the "wave of the future" and that the United States and the Free World were unable to halt its advance. Countries in the Far East, South Asia, and elsewhere in the world would be encouraged to adopt policies of accommodation to communist pressures and objectives.

3. *Economic Importance*

Southeast Asia (Malaya and Indonesia in particular) is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin. These materials are strategically important to both the West and to the Communists. Southeast Asia produced export surpluses of rice which are of critical importance to other countries of the Far East, and in particular to Japan and India. Communist acquisition of these rice surpluses would go far to remove a major problem in food for the Chinese Communists, and would provide the Communists with a powerful economic weapon against other countries of the Far East. Southeast Asia (particularly Indonesia) is an important secondary source of petroleum. Malaya is the largest net dollar earner for the United Kingdom, and its loss would seriously aggravate the economic problems of the U.K. Communist control of Southeast Asia would rob Japan of its potentially most important sources of raw materials and of potentially important markets.

4. *Strategic*

Southeast Asia is astride the most direct and best developed sea and air routes between the Western Pacific and India and the Near East. It has major naval operating bases (Singapore) and air bases. Communist control of Southeast Asia would render the U.S. position in the Pacific offshore island chain precarious.

5. *General*

Communist control of Southeast Asia could result in such economic and political pressures on Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to the Soviet bloc. The extension of Communist power into Burma would augment the communist threat to India and East Pakistan, enhance Communist opportunies for infiltration in these countries, and strengthen groups who favored communism or accommodation with communism. Communist control of Southeast Asia would create a communist potential for military isolation of Australia; would jeopardize the U.S. position in the Western Pacific; and would thus seriously jeopardize basic security interests of the U.S.

Editorial Note

On March 23, 1954, Charles E. Wilson, the Secretary of Defense, addressed a letter to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles transmitting the views of the Department of Defense on the military implications of a negotiated settlement to terminate hostilities in Indochina. The letter was accompanied by two enclosures: 1) A memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of March 12, titled "Preparation of the Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiations on Indochina for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference," and 2) a memorandum prepared by the President's Special Committee on Indochina titled "Military Implications of the U.S. Position on Indochina in Geneva," with a covering memorandum of March 17 by General Graves B. Erskine, Chairman of the working group of the Special Committee.

For text of the letter of March 23 and its enclosures, see volume XVI, page 471.

Editorial Note

On March 23, 1954, Secretary of State Dulles issued a news conference statement on the situation in Indochina. The Secretary said that he did not expect a Communist victory in Indochina and saw no reason to abandon the Navarre Plan. He affirmed the determination of the United States to continue to respond to French requests for funds and military matériel for the conduct of the war. He also stated, with regard to the possibility of a negotiated settlement being achieved at the Geneva Conference, that he saw no evidence that Communist China had changed its "aggressive, militaristic and expansionist mood."

For text of the statement, issued as Press Release No. 154, March 23, see Department of State *Bulletin*, April 5, 1954, pages 512–513.

751G.00/3-2454 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, March 24, 1954—11 a. m.

[Received 2:40 a. m.]

512. Repeated information Saigon 406, Paris 216. Paris limit distribution. Both Tillman Durdin of *New York Times* and Robert Guillain, who is covering Dien-Bien-Phu for Paris *Le Monde* testify to marked difference in attitude with regard to battle between Navarre's staff and that of Cogny. Staff of Commander-in-Chief, at least in contacts with press, reflects optimism, while Cogny's men make little effort disguise their pessimism.

Cogny's past and present Cabinet chiefs have told me within past week that Cogny never approved concept of Dien-Bien-Phu but accepted it as "a sporting proposition" when Navarre decreed its execution. It is certain that Cogny objected strongly to Na San, and attempted discourage any comparisons between that abandoned stronghold and Dien-Bien-Phu, on grounds that latter would serve as a point of departure for operations throughout Thai country rather than as a point of resistance to Viet Minh attacks. Cogny remarked to Guillain about one month ago that Dien-Bien-Phu "had changed color in his hands," meaning that fortress had tended to taking on color of Na San.

Durdin said that in his cables to *New York Times* he has deliberately avoided giving pessimistic reports, but that he fears press matter passed by censor for publication abroad may be giving too optimistic impression of prospects at Dien-Bien-Phu. His own estimate of the outcome is "50–50." Guillain said he has been told by source close to Navarre that Commander-in-Chief feels "terribly alone," in sense that his subordinate commanders and immediate staff do not share his own strategic ideas. For example, operation "Atlante," which has caused bitter feeling among officers here, has been described by Navarre as "chance to win the war," in strategic sense that vast coastal regions where "Atlante" is in progress had to be wrested from Viet Minh in order that enemy not use this area peacefully to prepare execution of Giap's long-range strategic plan, formulated as early as 1951, which is to take Cochin China by way of Cambodia. When Guillain discussed this idea with Cogny, latter said "we are not fighting the war as it may be two years hence; I am obliged to make my plans in periods of no more than six months."

Asked what immediate results he foresaw in France in event Dien-Bien-Phu should fall, Guillain, who appears share to some degree neutralist views of *Le Monde*, replied that Laniel government would fall promptly by large majority, and that Parliament would call for immediate negotiations with Ho Chi Minh. This remark may be of use in interpreting certain *Paris Presse* coverage of Dien-Bien-Phu.

STURM

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Meetings with the President"

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State [1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 24, 1954.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT

. . . .

Re Indochina, I referred to my memorandum of the day before,[2] which the President had read, reporting the talk with Ely, Radford, et al. The President said that he agreed basically that we should not get involved in fighting in Indochina unless there were the political preconditions necessary for a successful outcome. He did not, however, wholly exclude the possibility of a single strike, if it were almost certain this would produce decisive results.

I mentioned that it might be preferable to slow up the Chinese Communists in Southeast Asia by harassing tactics from Formosa and along the seacoast which would be more readily within our natural facilities than actually fighting in Indochina. The President indicated his concurrence with this general attitude.

. . . .

Returning to Indochina, I said that I had in mind saying[3] in a paraphrase of the Monroe address that the freedom of the Southeast Asia area was important from the standpoint of our peace, security and happiness, and that we could not look upon the loss to Communism of that area with indifference. The President agreed and also authorized us to give Ambassador Heath some discretionary authority to bolster up the morale of the Associated States leaders if there seemed to be evidence of a collapse of the French will. He did not, however, want anything said that would be an explicit promise that we might not be able to live up to.

J[OHN] F[OSTER] D[ULLES]

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[1] According to the Secretary's appointment book, this conversation occurred at 8 a. m. (Princeton University, Dulles papers, "Daily Appointments"). EDC and policy toward Communist China were also discussed.

[2] Dated Mar. 23, p. 1141.

[3] Reference is to the address the Secretary was to deliver on Mar. 29; see the second editorial note, p. 1181.

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations"

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford)[1]

[WASHINGTON,] March 24, 1954—10 a. m.

The Secretary returned the Admiral's call, and the Admiral said he was about to start his last Conference with General Ely. Radford told Wilson that the last few days have been frustrating. Ely requests material and gives no assurances of improved performance or willingness to accept training activities. Ely says that further training activity would cause political repercussions in Paris, and the Secretary agreed.

Radford talked with General Twining and they will send 25 B26's, but he is not sure they will make the best use of them. Radford wants to send a high air force mission to see why they are failing to get usage out of airplanes as they should. We have to do something to avoid the accusation we would not help them in their hour of need.

The Secretary said we must do some thinking on the premise that France is creating a vacuum in the world wherever she is. How can we fill that vacuum? One fellow is trying. The decision in this regard is one of the most important the US has made in a long time.

Radford mentioned the possibility of their walking out in 2–3 weeks if no victory. He said we look bad here to our own people. The appearances he will have to make—hearings etc.—can be embarrassing.

The Secretary said that pending a clarified political situation we might step up activities along the coast and from Formosa and also deal more directly with the Associated States.

The Secretary said the French situation is deplorable. He mentioned EDC and also Germany and said we may have to think of cutting loose on our treaties with France.

Radford said we must stop being optimistic about the situation. The Secretary said he talked with the President—we must stop pleading etc. and we must have policy of our own even if France falls down. We could lose Europe, Asia and Africa all at once if we don't watch out. Radford said he would brief the President, the Secretary and Wilson tomorrow morning, and it is not very cheerful.

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[1] Drafted by Phyllis D. Bernau of the office of the Secretary of State.

751G.00/3–2454 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, March 24, 1954—noon.
[Received 10:19 a. m.]

3500. Repeated information Saigon 398. Last night at dinner with Laniel he said he was much more encouraged regarding Indochina situation. The action at Dien Bien Phu had, he said, greatly improved morale in France and the spirit of defeatism, which had been rampant only a month ago, was now much more subdued.

DILLON

751G.00/3–2454 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, March 24, 1954—10 a. m.
[Received 11 : 50 a. m.]

1781. Repeated information Paris 565, Hanoi 297. I saw Bao Dai at Dalat yesterday evening. I found him in rather a determined and belligerent mood, a welcome change from his not infrequent attitudes of pessimism and querulous criticism.

I started conversation by saying that I had noted in press that he had decided to form a provisional assembly and constitute a high privy council. Bao Dai said that he would discuss matter when Buu-Loc returned but he had by no means definitely decided on such steps. What he wanted to create was a high "war council" that would really contribute to winning war against Viet Minh, or, otherwise stated, the survival of Vietnam. All other political plans and efforts should be subordinated to this great aim.

Ambassador De Jean had explained to him that French parliamentary opinion doubted that Bao Dai regime and Buu-Loc government were truly representative. He could of course constitute a provisional national assembly but he must observe that such an institution at this time might well result in greater national division and squabbling and gravely detract from national war effort. He therefore seriously questioned whether launching of such institutions at this time was in either French or Vietnamese interest.

He would not say that Vietnamese national army was ideal or perfect or that war effort to date was sufficient but nevertheless he felt that events of last months had shown Vietnamese were on right track in making expansion of army the overriding aim. To that end he was leaving today for several days stay in Hanoi, to be climaxed on March 26 by big public ceremony where Vietnamese officers would take oath of allegiance to him. Both in this ceremony and in speech he intended to give on that occasion he would make it clear that national army and he as its titular chief were determined to fight this war on to victory and not indulge in negotiations with enemy which could have no result other than gains for Communist side. He asked whether I would attend this ceremony and I replied I would be very glad to.

As regards the army, he remarked that Hinh, if not ideal as Chief of Staff, was intelligent and active and had achieved results. If Hinh was not too well liked in the army because of a certain prideful youthfulness, he was obeyed and was completely obedient to him, Bao Dai.

He was displeased that Buu-Loc had not heeded his urgent summons to return immediately to take hold of government and situation. Whereas in our last conversation he had expressed complete confidence in Buu-Loc's governing powers, he now said that Buu-Loc's record had so far been one of words rather than deeds and latter were urgently needed now. Such actions as eliminating serving of champagne at official functions made no outstanding impression on situation. I interrupted with remark that I thought Buu-Loc's promise to eliminate and punish graft had made a good impression. Bao Dai said trouble was Buu-Loc had done nothing concrete to that end. Bao Dai asserted, somewhat surprisingly, that he was all in favor of Buu-Loc punishing corruption and that he would support him. He did not, however, want this program confined to punishing a few petty officials who had made away with a few hundred piasters, while letting others who had probably stolen millions go scot free. He said of course it would be difficult to obtain legal proof of large peculations. He observed that ex-Presidents Huu's and Tam's fortunes had strangely and vastly increased during their terms of office.

Bao Dai then intimated in carefully chosen, veiled words that, if Buu-Loc did not come up to mark, he, Bao Dai, might take over government for a period.

Bao Dai said he had not definitely made up his mind as to attitude that Vietnam will take toward conference at Geneva. It would be repugnant for him to sit across table from Viet Minh delegation. Viet Minh were only rebels who should surrender on promise of fair treatment. They were not entitled to negotiate as equals with his government. French idea that China could be induced in some way to stop supplying arms to Viet Minh seemed totally absurd to him. If such request were made, China would counter by suggestion that France and US stop sending aid to Bao Dai. He feared conference would result in propaganda advantage for Viet Minh, who would appear there not as conquerors but as poor devils who had fought for independence of Vietnam for years and were prepared to strike an armistice on terms which unfortunately would be attractive to certain sectors of French opinion.

I remarked that French thesis was that Laniel government which had quite steadfastly stood for prosecution of war in Vietnam would have been in difficulties if they had not proposed conference on Indochina at Geneva and might have been succeeded by a government disposed to come to terms with Ho-Chi-Minh. Bao Dai said that he had no real fears of such development. Only half present French Government was really in favor of carrying on war. He, Bao Dai, would personally not fear even accession of Mendes-France to power. It was all very well to talk of ending war by negotiation but Mendes-France or any one else, if he came to power, would be faced by responsibilities and realities of military situation here.

He, Bao Dai, was not worried about fate of Dien-Bien-Phu. He felt that French Union troops would hold it. Even if Giap succeeded in taking Dien-Bien-Phu, it would be at price of terrific loss to Viet Minh battle corps. He knew Giap and he could not believe that latter had on his own initiative decided to assault that strong position. He must have been ordered to do so by Moscow and Peiping. Everything tended to show that it was decision of latter, including fact that China recently had been stepping up munitions for Viet Minh artillery at Dien-Bien-Phu.

Bao Dai said he had no complaint to make of General Navarre, except that he had launched operation "Atlante" in central Vietnam "too early" and to do so had denuded South Vietnam of battalions necessary to carry on pacification of region. Now, Navarre was asking that command in South Vietnam be returned to French hands. This was his right under Franco-Vietnamese military agreements but it was regrettable because of its effect on national war spirit. Cao-Daists and Hoa-Haos were supporting this return of command to French hands because they thought they could thus be confirmed in their ambition to set up regions now in their control as "feudal states within the state". Cao-Daist representatives in Paris, Bao Dai asserted, were approaching parliamentary groups with suggestion that Cochin China, former French colony, be set up under a combined Franco–Vietnamese autonomous government, a proposition which was pleasing to many sectors of French opinion.

Bao Dai said that he regretted, but did not seem unduly disturbed, that negotiations in Paris were being held up because of Bidault's refusal to accept Vietnamese thesis that new arrangements with France should consist of two documents, one confirming unrestricted independence of Vietnam and second Vietnam's voluntary adherence to French Union with supporting agreements giving concessions to legitimate French interests.

Bao Dai then stated "I do not believe French will cease their military effort here but in case they should make a deal with Ho-Chi-Minh, can I count on receipt of continuing aid from US in order to fight on?" I replied this was a hypothetical question which could only be answered, if at all, by my government. However, he knew heavy financial aid we had given toward expansion of Vietnamese army and I could inform him that there was general appreciation and awareness in Washington of necessity of holding line against Communism in Vietnam. I remarked that, as he knew, De Jean did not believe it would be possible to conclude an armistice with Viet Minh except on terms of absolute surrender of latter. I personally shared this view.

Comment: I am personally rather encouraged to hear Bao Dai talk of keeping up fight and indicating he would take a more active part. De Jean, whom I informed in a general way of my conversation, feels the same way. It is a good thing that Bao Dai is going to Hanoi. Question is whether Bao Dai will really follow through on his indications of greater personal activity and leadership. I intend of course to encourage him in that direction.

HEATH

751G.00/3-2454 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, March 24, 1954—6 p. m.
[Received 1:31 p. m.]

1778. Repeated information Paris 563. Re paragraph 1 Deptel 1703 repeated information Paris 3220[1] and final paragraph Embassy telegram 1762 repeated information Paris 552.[2]

We submit that French and ourselves would be in far stronger position at Indochina phase of Geneva conference if French Government could find its way clear to accept essence of Vietnamese proposals re independence. As we understand these proposals, France would simultaneously sign two treaties with Vietnam. One would clearly establish absolute independence and sovereignty of Vietnam; second invoking this sovereignty, would trace voluntary relationship of Vietnam within French Union and such concessions, economic or otherwise, and such military alliance as both parties would freely enter into.

Such procedure would do much to convince present attentistes and fencesitters that Vietnam has in fact achieved what Ho-Chi-Minh can never achieve since he is in reality a puppet of Communist imperialism.

If however, French Government refuses present Vietnamese demands and stands on letter of French Constitution and on fourth paragraph Assembly Ordre du Jour of March 9,[3] it seems obvious that Communists will come to Geneva conference with a much stronger hand. They can very convincingly, so far as Asiatic public opinion is concerned, maintain that Vietnamese representatives at Geneva are of inferior status to Viet Minh representatives since Vietnam is not in fact truly sovereign and Viet Minh have consistently held themselves out to be sole champions of nationalism in Indochina. More important, if a plebiscite or national elections should result from Geneva conference, it would be difficult to persuade many people here to vote for Vietnamese Government which had been unable to obtain proof of complete independence at Paris negotiations.

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[1] Paragraph 1 of telegram 1703 to Saigon, Mar. 18, read as follows: "Dept would be delighted at any successful manifestations of political vitality in Vietnam including holding of national elections prior to Geneva Conference if this were feasible. Dept cannot however from here judge extent to which difficulties described by you can be overcome, and as practical matter there would obviously be very great material difficulties in organizing and holding elections prior to April 26. Do you recommend any action by Embassy or Dept?" (751G.00/3-1554) For related documentation on planning for the Geneva Conference, see vol. XVI, pp. 397 ff.

[2] The final paragraph of telegram 1762 from Saigon, Mar. 21, read as follows: "We hope that French Government will agree to accept Vietnamese proposals as signature of convention establishing complete sovereignty would have good effect on public opinion throughout Vietnam, would effectively refute Ho Chi Minh propaganda that Vietnam is a puppet state, and would do much to rally opinion to a government of national union." (751G.00/3-2154)

[3] See footnote 2, p. 1103.

However, if French Government accepts present Vietnamese proposals, situation will be redressed. If Geneva conference leads ultimately to a plebiscite or to eventual elections in a unified Vietnam, we should of course play for time in which to let impact of full sovereignty sink in, and likewise to afford our information media opportunity to convince that half of Vietnamese population which for eight years has been under Communist domination that the independence for which they have fought is an actual thing and brings tangible benefits. Therefore, acceptance now by French Government of Vietnamese proposals will make it possible for free world to convince peoples of Indochina and all of Southeast Asia that Vietnam was able to secure by free grant from France what Ho-Chi-Minh can never win from Communist China.

If Department concurs in this reasoning, we feel that at highest level French Government should be apprised of our views.[4]

HEATH

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[4] Telegram 1766 to Saigon, Mar. 25, also sent to Paris as telegram 3309, read as follows:

"Saigon's 1778 repeated Paris 563.

"Department impressed with and generally in agreement with reasoning contained reftel. Anything which will perfect independence of Vietnam and increase Vietnamese determination make sacrifices without which that independence cannot be defended against present threat is desirable. Department also concurs general Western position at Geneva in light particularly of Asian opinion will be much improved by French acceptance Vietnamese proposals.

"On other hand, we must face fact that pending further strengthening Vietnamese national army, principal asset of our side at Geneva will be capacity and will of French continue current French military effort until cessation hostilities on terms acceptable our side achievable. Therefore before deciding to express views on this subject to French Government as suggested by Saigon Embassy, Department wishes Paris Embassy's views particularly on this aspect." (751G.00/3–2454)

For comments by the Embassy in France on this subject, see telegram 3675 from Paris, Apr. 2, p. 1212.

In a memorandum of Mar. 29 to Robert R. Bowie, Director, and Charles C. Stelle of the Policy Planning Staff, Edmund A. Gullion, also of S/P, stated the following with regard to telegram 1778 from Saigon: "I am entirely in accord with this telegram and only wish that it had come in under the same dateline three years, two years, or even one year ago." Gullion contended that it would be helpful if Secretary Dulles could present the French with such recommendations as were contained in telegram 1778, even though the French would be "annoyed." (PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Gullion")

751G.00/3-2454

Memorandum of Conversation, by William R. Tyler of the Office of Western European Affairs

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 24, 1954.

Subject: Indochina.

Participants: Mr. Pierre Millet, Counselor, French Embassy.
Mr. MacArthur, C.
Mr. Bonsal, PSA.
Mr. Tyler, WE.
Mr. Galloway, C.

Mr. Millet called on Mr. MacArthur this morning. He said he wished to bring up the remarks made by the Secretary yesterday in his conversation with General Ely.[1] Specifically, Mr. Millet said that Mr. Daridan, Chargé d'Affaires of the French Embassy, had been somewhat unclear as to the significance of what the Secretary had said concerning the question of any U.S. participation in the Indochina war. Mr. Millet asked first whether the Secretary's remarks should be considered as constituting a new proposal requiring further consideration by the French and further discussion with us. Mr. MacArthur made it clear that the Secretary had been talking about the hypothetical situation which would arise if the U.S. were requested to participate in the Indochina operations with elements of its armed forces. The Secretary had expressed informally and frankly, as is his custom in discussing problems of mutual interest with the French, some of the important factors which would have to be considered in arriving at any U.S. decision involving direct U.S. participation in the fighting in Indochina. He emphasized that the Secretary had not made a new proposal, and that no further action or reply was expected from the French.

Mr. Millet expressed his appreciation of Mr. MacArthur's remarks and added that since Mr. Daridan had felt uncertain of the import of what the Secretary had said, he had refrained from reporting this part of the conversation to Paris. Mr. Millet then observed that General Ely's specific question concerning U.S. reaction to Chinese Communist aerial intervention in Indochina had not been answered by the Secretary. Mr. MacArthur said there was no particular significance to this since the Secretary had understood that General Ely was leaving with Admiral Radford a written memo on this subject[2] which would be considered by the U.S. authorities, and that he, the Secretary, was obviously not in a position to give a formal reply in the context of the conversation. Mr. Millet was also told that the Secretary certainly had not intended his remarks on this subject to invalidate or modify in any way the statements he had made in his St. Louis speech of September 2, 1953, concerning the situation which would arise should the Chinese Communists intervene directly in the Indochina war.

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[1] For memoranda of the conversation, both dated Mar. 23, see pp. 1141 and 1142.

[2] The memorandum is printed as an enclosure to the memorandum by Admiral Radford to the President, *infra*.

Mr. Millet alluded to statements yesterday by Secretary Wilson concerning U.S. participation in the training of Vietnamese troops,[3] and particularly the establishment of a General Van Fleet-type of training mission [as] in Greece. Mr. MacArthur replied that he understood Secretary Wilson had pointed out that the context was a very different one in Indochina from what it had been in Greece. He may well have used the analogy for purposes of general indication of the problem.

Mr. Millet, on leaving, expressed his satisfaction at the conversation and the clarification which he had been given.

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[3] At his press conference of Mar. 23, the Secretary of Defense was questioned extensively about the purpose of the visit by General Ely and about the possibility of the United States undertaking training responsibilities in Indochina. Secretary Wilson acknowledged that the question of expediting the training of Vietnamese troops was being discussed with the French and that the participation of American advisers was one possibility under consideration. (Minutes of the press conference held by the Secretary of Defense, Mar. 23, 1954, Department of Defense files)

751G.00/3–2654

Memorandum by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) to the President[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] 24 March 1954.

Subject: Discussions with General Ely relative to the situation in Indo-China.[2]

1. During the period 20–24 March I conducted a series of discussions with General Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff, on the situation in Indo-China. In addition, General Ely conferred with the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of CIA and the U.S. Military Representative to NATO.

2. General Ely requested urgent action to make early delivery of various items of material that had previously been requested through the MAAG Indo-China. These were all arranged to the satisfaction

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[1] Copies of this memorandum were transmitted to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence.

[2] For Admiral Radford's memorandum of Mar. 29 to the President's Special Committee on Indochina, describing the discussions held with General Ely, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 277–285.

of General Ely except for 14 C-47 transport aircraft which are in critical supply and did not come in the urgent category. Noteworthy is the supply of 25 additional B-26s for a third squadron which will be furnished immediately on a temporary loan basis. A recent request for 20 helicopters and 80 additional U.S. maintenance personnel was discussed and he was informed that it was not possible to grant the request at this time.

3. General Ely made no significant concessions in response to suggestions which would improve the situation in Indo-China. He explained French difficulties involving domestic problems and maintenance of prestige as basic reasons for his non-concurrence. He agreed to explore informally the possibility of accepting limited U.S. assistance in training the Vietnamese, but is generally in opposition.

4. General Ely submitted a request in writing as to what action the U.S. would take if aircraft based in China intervened in Indo-China.[3] No commitment was made. The matter is being referred to the Secretary of State.

5. General Ely affirmed the gravity of the situation at Dien Bien Phu stating the outcome as 50-50, and emphasized the great importance of that battle from the political and psychological standpoint. In this I am in full accord but share the doubts of other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to the adequacy of the measures being taken by General Navarre. He was given approval to use C-119 transport aircraft to drop Napalm provided no U.S. crews were involved.

6. General Ely expressed the view that military successes but not total military victory were to be expected in 1954-55, with the presently programmed resources in pursuance of the Navarre Plan. He considers the problem in Indo-China to be political as well as military. Ultimate victory will require the independence of the Associated States, development of a strong indigenous army, manning and defending the Chinese frontier and commitment of resources greatly in excess of those which France can supply. He envisages some sort of coalition by the nations of S.E. Asia.

7. As a result of the foregoing conferences I am gravely fearful that the measures being taken by the French will prove to be inadequate and initiated too late to prevent a progressive deterioration of the situation. The consequences can well lead to the loss of all of S.E. Asia to Communist domination. If this is to be avoided, I consider that the U.S. must be prepared to act promptly and in force possibly to a frantic and belated request by the French for U.S. intervention.

ARTHUR RADFORD

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[3] See Enclosure, below.

Enclosure

Memorandum by the Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff (Ely) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 23 March 1954.

The absence of enemy air has been a characteristic of the military situation in Indochina since the beginning of operations. Therefore, an enemy air intervention would carry grave consequences.

On the other hand, the lack of jettable airfields in Vietminh controlled areas leads to the conclusion that any intervention by modern aircraft would start from Chinese territory.

Without prejudging decisions of a general nature which our governments could take in the event of an air aggression starting from China, it seems to me it will be of some use to study the best way of limiting the effects that such an attack might have on the French Air Force units and on the Corps Expeditionnaire even if it were carried out by aircraft of a doubtful nationality; this last assumption has not been made so far.

Can direct intervention by U.S. aircraft be envisaged and, if such is the case, how would it take place?

Contacts have already been made in the past by CINCPAC and the French CinC Indochina on this problem. I feel they ought to be renewed and pave the way for more precise studies and more detailed staff agreements with a view to limiting the air risk which characterizes the present situation.[4]

P. ELY

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[4] In his memorandum on the Ely conversations submitted to the President's Special Committee on Mar. 29, Admiral Radford indicated that he and the general had exchanged a minute which read as follows:

"In respect to General Ely's memorandum of 23 March 1954, it was decided that it was advisable that military authorities push their planning work as far as possible so that there would be no time wasted when and if our governments decided to oppose enemy air intervention over Indo-China if it took place; and to check all planning arrangements already made under previous agreements between CINCPAC and the CINC Indo-China and send instructions to those authorities to this effect." (*United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, p. 281)

A copy of the minute, bearing the typed signatures of Radford and Ely and indicating that the meeting thus recorded occurred on Mar. 26, is in the files of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the National Archives.

Editorial Note

During his news conference of March 24, 1954, President Eisenhower commented on the impending Geneva Conference and the battle of Dien Bien Phu. In the course of his remarks, he described the Southeast Asian area as being of "the most transcendent importance."

For the record of the news conference of March 24, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, pages 339–349.

711.58/3–2554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, March 25, 1954—8 p. m.

3544. Repeated information Saigon 401. Secretary Defense Wilson's announcement in his recent press conference [1] that he and General Ely were discussing the question of an American training mission in Vietnam and other subsequent press and radio reports to the same general effect, culminating in this morning's radio news broadcast wherein it was claimed that a Pentagon spokesman had stated that the question of sending an American mission to Vietnam to train Vietnamese troops was being seriously considered "as a morale booster to the French Union forces there" have again caused the most unfavorable reaction here.

Foreign Office has discussed the matter with us and has pointed out that according to their information, no such subject was discussed by Ely in Washington and that they were obliged to instruct that, in any case, the position of the French Government in the matter remains unchanged, i.e., that the terms of reference of the MAAG mission in Indochina are the same whether the mission is headed by Trapnell, O'Daniel or anyone else, and that there is no question of any other American training mission being sent to Indochina. The Foreign Office deplores the constant recurrence of speculation in the matter from Washington in spite of the facts and reminds us of the damaging effect it has in France and Vietnam at this time when the Indochina question is so delicate and the nature of the United States role and our interest in the matter is so much a part of that question and can so easily be distorted.

Foreign Office press officer informs us that they are obliged to deny similar rumors ostensibly originating in the Pentagon several times a day and can only conclude that the American sources responsible for the rumors are either unaware of the position of the French Government or are indulging in irresponsible wishful thinking.

From this side there is much to be said for the Foreign Office position. At a time when nerves are taut and emotions run high, as the Dien-Bien-Phu battle is prolonged and news of casualties comes in, it is unfortunate to lend any encouragement to the impression here that "the Americans are going to tell us how to fight this war provided we rather than they fight it" which inevitably leads to the next conclusion "in the case, why don't we turn it over to them entirely?" [2]

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[1] See footnote 3, p. 1158.

DILLON

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[2] In telegram 1823 from Saigon, Mar. 29, Ambassador Heath stated the following:

"We thoroughly agree with logic of Paris telegram 3544 sent Department, repeated Saigon 401. Furthermore, in connection with General O'Daniel's assumption of command of MAAG Saigon (incidentally, O'Daniel informs me that although orders have not yet been received he plans arrive here April 15), we note with regret according to *London Times* of March 24 that Secretary of Defense on being asked if General O'Daniel's aim when he arrived in IC would be to try to speed up training replied, 'if I did not think he had a good chance, he would not be going.' Such comments as these whether true or not will seriously handicap efficacy of General O'Daniel's operation here to say nothing, as reftel points out, of increasing feeling on part of French authorities that, if we are so anxious to train the Vietnamese, we might as well fight this war entirely without French participation." (711.5851G/3–2954)

751G.00/3–2554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, March 25, 1954—8 p. m.

3545. Repeated information Saigon 402, Hanoi 11. Limit distribution. Re Hanoi's 512 repeated Paris 216 and Saigon 406.[1] We find Guillain's comments contained last paragraph reference telegram unwarranted.

Although fall of Dien-Bien-Phu would have severely jarring effect on French public opinion and would undoubtedly influence future policy toward Indochina in Parliament, we doubt very much that it would bring about fall of Laniel government "by large majority" and that Parliament would call for "immediate negotiations with Viet Minh." There are other factors including the wish to avoid a prolonged government crisis in the knowledge that France should not be without a government during the impending Geneva conference, the wish of deputies to avoid the risk of dissolution and new elections at this time if the government should be overthrown by an absolute majority, the impending EDC debate, etc., which would cause Assembly to hesitate before overthrowing government at this time in spite of bad news from Indochina. Nor do we believe majority could be found in Parliament "in favor immediate negotiations with Viet Minh."

We interpret Guillain's views as a further expression of well known *Le Monde* neutralist and pessimist line, and believe they should be judged accordingly.

DILLON

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[1] Dated Mar. 24, p. 1149.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 190th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 25, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 190th Meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; the Acting Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Acting Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Item 5); Mr. Slezak for the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Acting Secretary of the Air Force (for Items 3, 4 and 5); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, and the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps (for Items 3, 4 and 5); the Director of Central Intelligence; Mr. Cutler and Mr. Jackson, Special Assistants to the President; the Deputy Assistant to the President; Mr. Robert R. Bowie, Department of State; Brig. Gen. Barksdale Hamlett, Department of Defense; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

Following is a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

1. *Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security*

The Director of Central Intelligence described the situation at Dien Bien Phu as relatively quiet. The Vietminh still appeared short of ammunition and supplies for their next attack. The French position had improved somewhat, as had the French chances of holding their position. The French Union forces were making effective use of napalm, but there had been no further replacements over and beyond the two battalions previously air-dropped and which brought French Union strength approximately to the level prior to the attack. Mr. Dulles further commented on the heavy psychological blow which would be dealt the French if Dien Bien Phu were lost.

The President inquired why the French had not sought to prevent the 308th Vietminh division from returning to Dien Bien Phu after its incursion into Laos. The President believed that the French should be able to interdict the only road available to this division.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Mar. 26.

Mr. Dulles said that he did not know why the French had permitted this division to retrace its steps. General Ridgway stated that the French explanation was that there was too much guerrilla resistance to enable them to prevent the division from returning.

The President commented that if the point had been reached when the French forces could be moved only by air, it seemed sufficient indication that the population of Vietnam did not wish to be free from Communist domination.

The President then inquired of Mr. Dulles whether General Navarre actually had a free hand in prosecuting the war in Indochina or whether in fact his freedom of action was circumscribed by the Paris politicians. Mr. Dulles offered the opinion that it was likely that General Navarre had freedom of action within the limits of the Navarre Plan itself but not outside of it. Dien Bien Phu, of course, was not included in the Navarre Plan.

. . . .

2. *U.S. Policies With Respect to Certain Contingencies in Indochina*

Secretary Dulles referred to a memorandum which set forth the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with respect to what the United States might do in the event of a French withdrawal or defeat in Indochina.[2] He read paragraph 11 of the JCS memo, which read: "The National Security Council consider now the extent to which the United States would be willing to commit its resources in support of the Associated States in the effort to prevent the loss of Indochina to the Communists either: *a.* In concert with the French; or *b.* In the event the French elect to withdraw, in concert with other allies or, if necessary, unilaterally." Secretary Dulles recommended that the Council instruct the Planning Board to prepare the desired report, and explained that Secretary Wilson also favored this proposal.

Mr. Cutler replied that the Planning Board would undertake the study at once, but inquired whether it should envisage U.S. intervention with military forces. He reminded the Council that this subject had been studied in a Special Annex to the recently adopted policy on

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[2] Reference is to a memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense titled "Preparation of Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiations on Indochina for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference," Mar. 12, 1954. Secretary of Defense Wilson transmitted the JCS memorandum to Secretary of State Dulles by letter of Mar. 23. For text of the memorandum and the covering letter, see vol. XVI, p. 471.

Southeast Asia,[3] but that the Special Annex had not met with a favorable response from the Council and that all copies of it had been withdrawn for destruction.

The President replied to Mr. Cutler by stating that what he was asking was the extent to which we should go in employing ground forces to save Indochina from the Communists. The President pointed out, however, that there were certain omissions in the JCS memorandum. There was, for example, no reference to the UN taking cognizance of the aggression in Indochina. While he knew that the French were much opposed to any appeal to the UN, he himself did not see how the United States or other free world nations could go full-out in support of the Associated States without UN approval and assistance.

Secretary Dulles expressed the belief that while it might not be impossible to get a two-thirds UN vote in favor of intervention in Indochina, it would be far from easy, since we could count on the opposition of the Asian-Arab bloc, among others.

The President said he believed that the UN would certainly not intervene merely on the strength of a French appeal, but might do so if Vietnam called for assistance and particularly cited Chinese Communist aid to the rebels. In any case, said the President, he was clear that the Congress would have to be in on any move by the United States to intervene in Indochina. It was simply academic to imagine otherwise.

Secretary Wilson raised the question of what our reaction should be in the event that the Chinese Communists sent in MIG aircraft for operations over Indochina. Mr. Cutler answered that the existing policy paper on Southeast Asia was quite clear on this point. If the Chinese Communists flew aircraft into Indochina they would be guilty of overt aggression, and our response to such aggression had been clearly set forth in NSC 5405.

Secretary Dulles agreed with Mr. Cutler's response to Secretary Wilson's question, but pointed out that even so, the Executive would still have to go to Congress before intervening in the Indochina war. He then reminded the Council that the Attorney General was presumably preparing an opinion with respect to the prerogatives of the President and of the Congress in the matter of using U.S. military forces to counter aggression, and he hoped that the Attorney General would hasten completion of his report. The President suggested that Mr. Cutler prod the Attorney General, and suggested that this might be the moment to begin to explore with the Congress what support could be anticipated in the event that it seemed desirable to intervene in Indochina.

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[3] Reference is to the Special Annex to NSC 177 (renumbered NSC 5405). For extracts from NSC 5405, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia," Jan. 16, 1954, see p. 971. For text of the Special Annex, recirculated on Mar. 29, see p. 1183.

Secretary Dulles expressed the opinion that a lot more work needed to be done by the NSC on this problem before we were ready to take it up with Congress. He pointed out that the fighting season in Indochina would end soon, and he believed would end without a clear military decision. Furthermore, he thought it quite unlikely that the Chinese Communists would engage their MIGs in battle over Indochina prior to the Geneva Conference. The Communists were seeking a political rather than a military victory at this stage, and we could therefore safely discount overt Chinese intervention in Indochina. Nevertheless, the United States would certainly have to reach a clear-cut decision vis-à-vis the French. We were witnessing, said Secretary Dulles, the collapse or evaporation of France as a great power in most areas of the world. The great question was, who should fill the void left by the collapse of French power, particularly in the colonial areas. Would it be the Communists, or must it be the U.S.? In its consideration of the problem of U.S. intervention in Indochina, the Planning Board should give consideration to the fact that the United States could not move into the position abandoned by France in Indochina without estimating the repercussions in other parts of the world. Secretary Dulles expressed the belief that the French had actually reached a point where they would rather abandon Indochina than save it through United States intervention and assumption of French responsibilities. All this constituted primarily a political rather than a military problem. Accordingly, it could be settled after the end of the fighting season in May. In any event, Secretary Dulles did not believe that there was any need for the Council to proceed on the assumption of an imminent French military withdrawal. There was, accordingly, time allowed us to work out some kind of suitable UN action.

Governor Stassen suggested that the logical first step in UN action to save Indochina would be the prompt dispatch of UN observation teams to Indochina.

(At this point, Admiral Radford entered the meeting.)

The President raised the question of what specific nations might be induced to join us in a broadened effort to save Indochina.[4] It might be done, he thought, on the basis of expanding the ANZUS Treaty. There were in any case only two possible ways of carrying this thing through. One was to induce the United Nations to intervene. The other was to get Vietnam to invite certain specific nations to come to its assistance on the basis of a treaty between Vietnam and each of the assisting nations. This latter offered the United States a good chance, since we could in all probability get the necessary two-thirds majority vote in the Senate on such a treaty. There was the added advantage, continued the President, that this procedure avoided solely Occidental assistance to Vietnam.

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[4] For additional documentation on united action, particularly as regards broader aspects of the defense of Southeast Asia, see volume XII.

Admiral Radford agreed that we might well reach the point where it would be necessary to consider something like the President's proposals, although he had, up to now, been very reluctant to expand the membership of the ANZUS Treaty powers.

Governor Stassen expressed the belief that the best way to proceed to give the Associated States the necessary outside assistance would be to call for an economic conference of the Asian nations and thereafter gradually introduce the military security factor. That, in essence, was how NATO got started.

After further discussion of the governments and nations who might be approached to assist the Associated States, the President said that he thought that such a grouping of nations would probably have to be confined to those nations in or near Southeast Asia itself. If an attempt were made to expand the number to include, for instance, Japan and Korea, we would run up against the hostility which exists between so many of the Asian nations. It would perhaps be better, therefore, to consider Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Formosa, the free nations of Southeast Asia, the British, and the French. That was enough, wasn't it?

Secretary Dulles commented that of course the real problem which one immediately encountered in trying to decide on procedure, was France. Either it would be necessary for the United States to beat the French into line, or else to accept a split with France. Both courses of action involved the gravest difficulty, particularly in relation to EDC.

The President commented that of one thing at least he was absolutely certain: The United States could not go into China unless the Vietnamese welcomed our intervention.

Secretary Wilson asked whether it would be sensible to forget about Indochina for a while and concentrate on the effort to get the remaining free nations of Southeast Asia in some sort of condition to resist Communist aggression against themselves. The President expressed great doubt as to the feasibility of such a proposal, since he believed that the collapse of Indochina would produce a chain reaction which would result in the fall of all of Southeast Asia to the Communists.

The National Security Council: [5]

a. Directed the NSC Planning Board to consider and make recommendations, prior to the Geneva Conference, as to the extent to which and the circumstances and conditions under which the United States would be willing to commit its resources in support of the Associated States in the effort to prevent the loss of Indochina to the Communists, in concert with the French or in concert with others or, if necessary, unilaterally.

b. Directed the NSC Planning Board in this connection to avail itself of any longer-range plans developed by the Special Committee in accordance with NSC Action No. 1019-*b*.[6]

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[5] Points *a* and *b* below constituted NSC Action No. 1074, Mar. 25, 1954. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

[6] For NSC Action No. 1019, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 181st Meeting of the National Security Council, Jan. 21, p. 986. Regarding the reports prepared by the President's Special Committee on Indochina, see memorandum from Smith to the President, Mar. 11, p. 1108; the first editorial note, p. 1148; and footnote 8, p. 1257.

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations"

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) [1]

[WASHINGTON,] March 25, 1954—5:52 p. m.

The Sec. returned the Admiral's call, and the Adm. said he had sent a copy of a memo given to the President this morning and a paper re Ely.[2] The Sec. said he had just gotten it. Radford said we are taking action to send B25's [*B–26's?*]—but only under circumstances where we can investigate why we don't get better usage. Radford told Ely we would not send them unless Ely agreed. Ely stayed over at Radford's request, and is leaving at 3:30 tomorrow. The Sec. said we should not answer their paper until we get a lot of answers from them. Radford said he thought the military could go ahead on that level and investigate and there would be no commitments. The Sec. agreed. The total implications involve such a commitment. The Sec. said he would not like to see us do it until we had better assurances from the French that we can work effectively together. Radford said they talked all day yesterday and a record is being prepared—they were very frank in telling what each thought. He will show the record to the Sec. tomorrow—probably when they dine in the evening.

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[1] Drafted by Phyllis D. Bernau of the office of the Secretary of State.

[2] See memorandum to the President by Admiral Radford, dated Mar. 24, and enclosure, p. 1158.

State–JCS Meetings, lot 61 D 417

Substance of Discussions of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at the Pentagon Building, March 26, 1954, 11:30 a.m.[1]

TOP SECRET

PRESENT

Admiral Radford
General Ridgway
General Twining
Admiral Derveen [*Duncan?*]
General Shepherd
General Lemnitzer
General Carns
General Mathewson[2]
General Everest[3]
Admiral Boone
General Fox
General Tate[4]
Admiral Gardner

Mr. Murphy
Mr. MacArthur
Mr. Bowie
Mr. Robertson
Mr. Bonsal
Mr. Stelle
Mr. Goodyear

Defense

Admiral Davis[5]
Mr. Sullivan

CIA

General Cabell
Mr. Amory

NSC

Mr. Gleason

[Here follow opening remarks and discussion of administrative and procedural aspects of preparations for the Geneva Conference.]

Mr. Murphy then asked Admiral Radford about General Ely's visit, and noted that the Indochina question had been referred to the Planning Board by NSC on March 25.

Admiral Radford said General Ely had made him pessimistic about Indochina. The General had come over to make an urgent request for matériel, particularly B–26s. He had at first said that the French had no maintenance problem, but rather a problem of lack of spare parts.

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[1] This State Department draft was not cleared with the participants.

[2] Lt. Gen. Lemuel Mathewson, USA, Director, Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, since Mar. 19, 1954.

[3] Lt. Gen. Frank F. Everest, Deputy Chief of Staff, USAF.

[4] Maj. Gen. Robert F. Tate, Air Force Member of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[5] Vice Adm. Arthur C. Davis, USN, Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense.

This had not been Admiral Radford's information, so a request for clarification had been sent to General Navarre through General Trapnell. The reply had come back (through a French channel) that spare parts had never been critical, but that maintenance personnel had.[6] (General Ely had obviously [been] miffed that someone had crossed him up.)

Admiral Radford continued that the French were getting only 25 flying hours a month out of their planes instead of the 75–100 hours they should. But, the Admiral added President Eisenhower did not want the U.S. Government to be in the position of not letting the French have material which we had available, and which they desperately needed, simply because of a technicality. It had finally been agreed with General Ely that if the French permitted a group of high level USAF officers to investigate on the spot in Indochina, and if it were determined by this group that the French needed and could service additional planes, a third squadron of B–26's would be made available to the French on a loan basis. Including the 22 we had sent them a few months back, that would make 35 planes they would have which we originally had not planned to give them.

The French also wanted transports and helicopters, the Admiral said. We had turned down the request for helicopters because we could never get them to Indochina in time. You couldn't fly them there; and there were no mechanics available. The French already have eleven helicopters, it was noted.

Admiral Radford explained that in an overall discussion, General Ely had given the garrison at Dienbienphu a 50–50 chance. We had plainly told the General that we didn't think the French were doing all they could. For example, why hadn't they organized a relief column? Impossible, said General Ely. We pointed out that the Viet Minh had driven down to Dienbienphu and back. It was still impossible, according to the General.

General Ely had said that General Navarre had absolute authority, but the Chiefs expressed interest in a despatch from our Consul General in Hanoi indicating a difference of outlook between General Cogny and General Navarre.[7] It would appear that General Cogny was not happy with certain aspects of the Navarre plan.

When the Admiral discussed the question of training the Vietnamese forces with General Ely, the General had said this was a most difficult problem because of questions of "French prestige". The French felt that they would lose face in the eyes of the Vietnamese if they invited American military personnel to participate in a training program. It would mean that the solution of the problem was beyond purely French capability. Admiral Radford had countered to General Ely that allowing American participation in the training program might actually improve French prestige because that would show the Vietnamese that the French were really interested in making a success of the exercise.

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[6] The correspondence under reference has not been found in Department of State files.

[7] See telegram 512 from Hanoi, Mar. 24, p. 1149.

General Ely had said the French were depressed by Secretary Wilson's press conference in which he had said that we were trying to get the French to accept a training program participated in by the U.S.[8]

Speculating on the future in Indochina, General Ely had stated that in 1954–1955, military "successes"—but not victories—are to be expected. The General had added that the problem was importantly a political one. It involved the building up of a strong indigenous army. It involved manning the Chinese frontier. The General envisaged a possible coalition in South East Asia, which would be required to hold the line after victory.

Admiral Radford got the definite impression from his talks with General Ely that the French were playing Indochina by ear; that they were not sure of themselves. They took the position that Dienbienphu had been blown up out of all proportion. There could be, the French admitted, unpredictable psychological results if Dienbienphu was not held; the Vietnamese army, according to the General, might even turn on the French. General Ely had admitted all this, but he maintained that the French could hold Dienbienphu if they had extra airplanes and supplies from the U.S.

General Ely had relayed a personal message from Bidault to Admiral Radford indicating an intention to hold the line at Geneva if there were no military catastrophes in Indochina.[9] On the subject of "negotiations" with the Viet-Minh, General Ely had no illusions. There was no alternative to military victory in Indochina. You either won a military victory, or you lost the Associated States.

According to Admiral Radford, General Ely had stressed in a memorandum his interest in what the U.S. would do if MIGs appeared over Indochina.[10] Admiral Radford had expressed a willingness to investigate the problem without making any commitments.

The Admiral elaborated further on the ramifications of this question. What advance preparation could be made? Would carriers be involved? What about an F–86 squadron? Were there airfields in Indochina capable of servicing an F–86 squadron? To Mr. Murphy's inquiry concerning whether or not the French would supply the personnel for any jets which we might make available in Indochina, Admiral Radford replied in the negative: introducing jets would involve direct intervention on our part.

At this point Mr. Murphy adverted to Secretary Dulles' radio and television speech planned for Monday, March 29,[11] and said that while it dealt with Communist China and Indochina it contained nothing new or startling in the way of policy.

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[8] See footnote 3, p. 1158.

[9] The message has not been found in Department of State files, or in the files of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[10] For text, see p. 1160.

Admiral Radford then summed up the general JCS feeling concerning General Ely's visit. He said the Joint Chiefs concluded that the present situation in Indochina was the result of too little too late, and that it might involve the loss of all of South East Asia. The U.S., the Admiral emphasized, must be prepared to act promptly and in force to a last minute French request for help. He added that if the French waited too long before asking for help, there would probably not be much we could do. The business of "nibbling" help made for difficulties. In short, the JCS derived no feeling of strength from General Ely.

At this point, General Ridgway reverted to Dienbienphu. Commenting on General Ely's estimate that the garrison had a 50–50 chance, General Ridgway stated that he did not agree because the men at Dienbienphu had no alternative but to fight. It was a question of morale. Their lives were at stake.

Discussion then took place concerning the composition of forces at Dienbienphu. Mr. Bonsal noted that while there had been reports of some desertions of the native forces, it had turned out that these reports had probably been engendered by the fact that some of the natives had gone off temporarily to join their families, but presumably planned to return to the front.

Mr. Murphy noted that the Planning Board was scheduled to discuss Indochina on Monday.[12] Mr. Bowie inquired if it would be possible to have the Annex to the paper prepared by the JCS on Indochina. (The Annex referred to apparently dealt with an analysis of the forces required to hold Indochina if the French withdrew.) [13] Admiral Radford agreed to hunt up the paper and to make it available to State.

General Cabell (CIA) inquired concerning the JCS position on the question of supplying guerilla type arms in Indochina. Should we supply such arms in quantity now, or should we wait, and supply only small amounts at the present time? It was noted that guerilla arms would be of no help in the current crisis.

Admiral Radford replied that among the matters he had discussed with General Ely had been the desire of the U.S. to form a better association with the French in psychological warfare matters.

General Cabell remarked that General Ely had frustrated our efforts to help them by playing the same old broken record about French prestige. He noted that we had supplied some small arms to guerillas, but on no large scale. Apparently the French were not doing much with respect to guerillas.

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[11] See the second editorial note, p. 1181.

[12] Mar. 29.

[13] Reference is presumably to the annex to the Planning Board study of Apr. 5. prepared for the National Security Council, or an antecedent draft thereof. Regarding the Apr. 5 report, see footnote 2, p. 1250.

Admiral Radford noted that Senator Knowland had recently asked him what would happen to all the U.S. equipment in Indochina if there were a disaster there. The Admiral was inclined to think that it would be possible to make provisions to gain control of the equipment in Hanoi warehouses and in other available sites, but that it would be necessary to write off matériel already in French hands.

Reverting to the guerilla question, Admiral Radford indicated that we had no idea concerning (1) the capabilities and (2) the intentions of the natives. He agreed to ask General Trapnell for his opinion of these points. General Cabell indicated that the French were pessimistic both as to native capabilities and intentions. General Ridgway suggested that it would be advisable to hold up initiating any elaborate program with respect to guerillas unless and until we got the basic situation in hand—and momentum in our favor develops. Otherwise, he said, all would be lost.

Mr. Murphy inquired when General O'Daniel was planning to leave for Indochina, and was told sometime early in April. On this note, the meeting came to an end.

Eisenhower Library, James C. Hagerty papers

Hagerty Diary, March 26, 1954

[Extract]

[WASHINGTON, undated.]

. . . .

Cabinet Meeting

1. *Dulles* reviewed Indo-China situation—said we must help Fr. win in Indo-China—if not, Reds would win that part of world and "cut our defense line in half"—predicted U.S. may have to take "fairly strong action"—involving risks—"but these risks will be less if we take them now rather than waiting for several years"—said Fr. should give political sovereignty to Associated States—Fr. want our help, but not in any form they think might damage their prestige in area—we should train local troops and work for freedom for states—fighting season to stop in about 30 days—but "serious situation"—Cabot Lodge asked if couldn't turn Indo-China into another Greece, where we trained and helped them—Pres. said situation different—Greeks were sturdy people with will to win, Vietnam "backward people" who don't think Fr. sincere in granting them freedom—"France presents difficult questions everywhere you look."

. . . .

751G.00/3–1254 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Republic of China [1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, March 26, 1954—3 p. m.

802. Taipei's 502.[2] You may inform Foreign Minister US is not disposed to accept passively loss of Indochina and South East Asia to Communists. We are actively exploring procedures and courses of action and among other things we are giving careful consideration to placing matter before UN.

For your information it seems unlikely there will be any decisive military result during present fighting season. At most there will be military developments which may weaken French political will to continue the struggle. However, ending of the fighting will give opportunity for political explorations.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by the Secretary of State. Repeated to Saigon as 1778 and Paris as 3330.

[2] In telegram 502 from Taipei, Mar. 12, Karl L. Rankin, the Ambassador in the Republic of China, stated the following: "Foreign Minister today expressed himself to me quite pessimistically over Indochina situation. He thinks additional ground forces, American or other, will be needed. Recognizing political and other objections to US as such furnishing military support, he inquired re Department's attitude toward US placing matter before Security Council with view to eventual UNO action." (751G.00/3–1254)

751G.00/3–2654

Memorandum by the Director of the Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs (Wainhouse) to the Secretary of State [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 26, 1954.

Subject: Possible Use of the United Nations in the Indochina Situation.

In response to your request at this morning's staff meeting, we have set down some possible courses of action in the United Nations on the Indochina problem.

1. *Employment of the Peace Observation Commission.*

The Security Council, the General Assembly or the Interim Committee could direct the Peace Observation Commission to send a subcommission and/or observers for reports on hostilities in the area.

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[1] This memorandum was drafted by David H. Popper and Eric Stein of UNP. Stein also prepared a memorandum titled "Desirability of UN Action as Basis for US Military Action in Indochina," which was transmitted by David McK. Key, Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, to the Secretary of State on Apr. 5. A handwritten notation on the source text of the Apr. 5 memorandum, by Roderic L. O'Connor, Special Assistant to Secretary Dulles, indicates that the Secretary agreed with Key at a meeting of Apr. 6 that the United Nations would have to be informed of any unified action. No details were discussed. The Secretary did not see the paper of Apr. 5. (PSA files, lot 54 D 190, "Indochina")

This might:

highlight and thus hamper the flow of Chinese assistance to Viet Minh,
tend to discourage invasion by Chinese Communists,
provide basis for further United Nations action if desired, including a call for international assistance,
detract from the "colonial" character of the war,
help make United States assistance more palatable to US opinion.

The Soviets would very likely veto Security Council action. If the matter were referred to the General Assembly, it is probable that eventually the entire Indochina problem would be discussed and there would be strong pressures for negotiations with Ho Chi-Minh.

2. *A Complaint of Aggression Against the Associated States.*

The Associated States, perhaps in conjunction with Thailand and others, might raise the Indochina situation in the General Assembly or the Security Council to obtain a condemnation of aggression against the Associated States, with emphasis on Chinese Communist support, and to recommend that Members assist them to maintain their integrity.

This would:

give broader political and moral backing to the anti-Communist effort in Indochina (i.e. "internationalize" the problem),
serve to justify United States participation,
facilitate provision of assistance by other states.

On the other hand, such action would:

probably not receive more than 36 affirmative votes in the Assembly, with many abstentions,
stimulate efforts to have the Assembly add: (*a*) a call for a cease-fire and negotiated settlement; (*b*) a statement of objectives for such a settlement stressing the need for complete independence of the Associated States, perhaps with a plebiscite; (*c*) provision for limiting the conflict to Indochina and by implication excluding any military action in Communist Chinese territory; and (*d*) a provision for a United Nations Commission or mediator to bring about negotiations.

3. *A United Nations Commission to Assist in Establishing Independent Governments in Indochina.*

Assuming the military action is continued, the General Assembly could be asked to set up a commission composed perhaps of one member sympathetic to French interests (Belgium), one Asian state (Pakistan), and the United States, to work out with the French and the Associated States a plan for full independence in association with the French Union.

Such a commission might:

undertake conversations with local groups including elements supporting Ho, though not negotiating directly with him,
arrange elections in two or three years,
sanction the presence of French forces in the area for a transition period, as a safeguard against aggression,
utilize the United Nations Technical Assistance Program to help rehabilitate the area.

4. *United Nations Commission to Assist in Negotiated Settlement.*

If the French insist on negotiating for a settlement with the Viet Minh, the General Assembly might establish a commission similar to the United Nations Commission on Korea, to supervise the implementation of any agreement reached.

Such a commission could be empowered to:

supervise a cease-fire,
observe compliance with military provisions of a settlement,
observe elections,
consult with various elements of the population,
make recommendations on the establishment of representative governments, economic relations, etc.

5. *Temporary United Nations Administration of Indochina.*

The General Assembly could (a) appoint an administrator or a commission with specified temporary powers of administration, or (b) request the Trusteeship Council to take over temporary administration.

Assuming French cooperation, this might:

provide for transitional period of consolidation prior to any election or plebiscite,
make possible the presence of French troops during this critical period,
provide international supervision of and assistance in the development of independent governments.

In the event of French decision to withdraw without delay, this might provide some possibility for filling in the vacuum left by French withdrawal. However, any such arrangement, even if agreed to by France, would be opposed by the Associated States and might impose an unmanageable task upon the United Nations with the consequent collapse of any authority in the area and the assumption of control by the Communists.

Conclusion

The advantages of action in the United Nations would be: (*a*) increased international stature for the Associated States; (*b*) opportunity for demonstrating that the war in Indochina is not just a "colonial" war; (*c*) increased support of US public opinion for American assistance; (*d*) maintenance of the principle of collective resistance to aggression; (*e*) possibly some assistance from other United Nations Members in the war and in the rehabilitation of Indochina; and (*f*) if we cannot maintain Western position in Indochina, method of minimizing losses or facilitating acceptance of new status.

The disadvantages would be: (*a*) difficulty of controlling United Nations action in order to prevent recommendations we might not approve (e.g. pressure for negotiated settlement); (*b*) weakening of France's position in Indochina with ultimate effect on the North African situation; (*c*) unless thoroughly concerted with the French, risk of serious breach between the United States and France; (*d*) possible acceleration of French abandonment of Indochina.

DAVID W. WAINHOUSE

751G.5/3-2754 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT SAIGON, March 27, 1954—midnight.

[Received 2:25 a. m.]

1806. Repeated Paris 573. General Gambiez, Navarre's Chief of Staff, called on me this morning at Navarre's request once more to reiterate absolute urgency of prompt action granting French request for 20 helicopters to be sustained by 80 US mechanics to meet requirement at Dien Bien Phu for evacuating wounded.

Gambiez read most of a top secret telegram from Navarre to French Government giving Commander-in-Chief communication of military situation at Dien Bien Phu. As Gambiez pointed out, an entire page of this 1½-page message was devoted to problem of evacuating wounded.

Navarre's estimate of situation is that Viet Minh are faced with two choices: An all-out attack, or a prolonged "smothering operation". In either event, problem of removing wounded is of paramount importance to French—Navarre informs his government that Intelligence is positive that enemy has sufficient [supplies] in his supply line from China to continue operations at Dien Bien Phu at least until end of April.

Navarre is not optimistic that Viet Minh will grant French requests for truce during which wounded can be evacuated. He suggests, however, that French Government be prepared to give assurances, as is customary under international law with regard to removing wounded from besieged fortresses, that personnel removed under a truce will not again bear arms against Viet Minh. If, however, as he expects, enemy rejects French request, then two courses of action must be followed:

1. Every medium of information must be used to show world that Viet Minh are violating laws of war by refusing truce and by deliberately focusing their fire on Red Cross aircraft;
2. Immediate means must be found, preferably by helicopter, to remove wounded which can be performed by night using US techniques.

General Gambiez added that there was no doubt whatever that Viet Minh were following a deliberate policy of concentrating fire on Red Cross aircraft. He, himself, had participated in a recent parachute drop and, although his plane was hit twice, there did not seem to be any concentrated ack-ack fire at French drop aircraft. This was in contrast to spotter-called fire on French helicopters and C–47s clearly identified by Red Cross markings which had sought to evacuate wounded.

Gambiez said that in order to allay anxiety at home, French Command here had at first given impression that most of wounded were now out of Dien Bien Phu. This, however, is not actually the case. Numbers of wounded increase daily and world must now know what sort of enemy French and Vietnamese are facing at Dien Bien Phu.

I told Gambiez that we would urgently recommend Department do its utmost with our Defense authorities to assure that Navarre's request for helicopters is promptly met.

I also feel that a statement, either by the President or the Secretary, would be helpful. As Gambiez, who lost his own son to Viet Minh fire on a Red Cross helicopter, very truly said, "I do not expect that enemy will grant a truce for any humanitarian motive. However, he may grant a truce because of his fear of outraged world opinion and his constant concern for the propaganda effect of what he does."

HEATH

751G.5/3–2754 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, March 27, 1954—3:40 p. m.

3361. Verbatim text. Please deliver following message from President Eisenhower to President Coty.[2] White House releasing text to press noon Sunday [3] Washington time.

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[1] Telegram drafted by William R. Tyler of the Office of Western European Affairs. Repeated to Saigon as 1789.

[2] In telegram 3239 to Paris, Mar. 19, repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 1724, the Department requested comment on the advisability of a message from President Eisenhower to President Coty of France paying tribute to the

"My dear Mr. President:

In common with millions of my countrymen, I salute the gallantry and stamina of the commander and soldiers who are defending Dien Bien Phu. We have the most profound admiration for the brave and resourceful fight being waged there by troops from France, Viet Nam, and other parts of the French Union. Those soldiers, true to their own great traditions, are defending the cause of human freedom and are demonstrating in the truest fashion qualities on which the survival of the free world depends. I would be grateful if you would convey to the commander of the gallant garrison of Dien Bien Phu this expression of my admiration and best wishes. Dwight D. Eisenhower."[4]

DULLES

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heroism of the defenders of Dien Bien Phu. The Department expressed awareness of the danger of such a message being interpreted as pressure by the United States to keep the French fighting in Indochina. (751G.5/3-1954) Ambassador Dillon responded in telegram 3462 from Paris, Mar. 22, that such a message would have a "highly salutary effect at this time." He suggested basic points which might be embodied in the communication. (751G.5/3-2254) In telegram 1770 from Saigon, Mar. 23, Ambassador Heath agreed that a carefully phrased Presidential message would have a heartening effect, but suggested that any communication be addressed separately and simultaneously to President Coty and Bao Dai. (751G.5/3-2354)

Proposed statements were transmitted by Assistant Secretary Merchant to Secretary Dulles by memorandum of Mar. 23. A handwritten notation on the memorandum indicated that the Secretary discussed the matter with President Eisenhower, who dictated another message. (751G.00/3-2354) The final text, dictated by the President on Mar. 27, was a slightly revised version of the State Department draft. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file)

The same message, *mutatis mutandis*, was transmitted to Saigon for delivery to Bao Dai in telegram 1790 of Mar. 27.

[3] Mar. 28.

[4] In a message of Mar. 30, President Coty responded as follows:

"My dear Mr. President: I have transmitted without delay, to the fighting men of Dien Bien Phu and to their Chiefs the message you sent to me. The expeditionary corps and the national armies of the Associated States are fighting in Indochina not only for the safeguard and the independence of the Associated States but also for the common ideal adopted by the whole free world, as our American friends know so well. Our soldiers will proudly welcome this testimony by the former Commander in Chief, who led the allied troops to victory in the fight against oppression." This translation was sent to the Department of State by the White House on Mar. 31. (Presidential Correspondence, lot 66 D 204)

On Apr. 16, the exchange of messages was released at Augusta, Georgia, where the President was on vacation. The texts made public at that time included the following reply to the President's message by Bao Dai:

"At moment when all who here participate in battle for dignity of man are bound by anxiety and animated by hope your message is a precious comfort.

"The moving battle of Dien Bien Phu symbolizes the determination of communism to impose its rule without regard for the suffering of the people. Also opens all eyes to reality of force and wills which refuse to bow before the Red despotism.

"Before this dramatic circumstance, the Vietnamese people unite in determination and recognizing the disinterested aid given them by the great American nation address to it the expression of their gratitude and friendship." (*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, pp. 399-400)

751G.00/3–2754

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Bonbright)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 27, 1954.

Subject: Secretary's forthcoming speech on Indo-China and China [1]

Participants: The Secretary of State
Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador
J. C. H. Bonbright, EUR

In the course of his conversation with the British Ambassador on the EDC and other questions the Secretary informed Sir Roger that he was making a speech on March 29 in which he would deal with the question of US policy toward Indo-China and the Chinese Communist regime. With regard to the former he indicated that this speech was designed in part for consumption in France where the idea seemed to be growing that the US should buy peace in Indo-China by concessions perhaps in the form of recognition of the Communist regime and its admission to the UN. He planned to make it clear that this Government would not make concrete concessions in return for Chinese Communist promises. The Secretary said that the American Joint Chiefs of Staff were extremely worried over the possibilities of a French "pull out" and indicated that his thoughts were running along the lines of some action in the UN, which we had long favored, or some form of regional grouping in South East Asia for defense purposes. In response to an inquiry from the Ambassador as to whether the Secretary had in mind an organization like NATO, the Secretary said that he had reached no firm conclusions, that for the moment he was thinking more in terms of a temporary arrangement which might or might not in time take on a permanent form like NATO.[2]

On the question of recognition the Secretary pointed out that he was avoiding words like "never". However, as he had told Molotov in Berlin, the Chinese Communists make no secret of the fact that they hate and despise us and will do everything they can to force our withdrawal from the Western Pacific. In the circumstances, it was out of the question for this government to take any step which would increase the prestige of a regime which was our avowed enemy nor would we help them to join an organization such as the UN where they would be given a wider forum for attacking us and opposing our policies. Sir Roger expressed the opinion that he did not believe this attitude would cause difficulties with his government. As for the UK position, as far as he knew, it was completely unchanged. In this connection he referred to a recent speech by Sir Gladwyn Jebb and said that this was not to be regarded as an expression of the views of the British Government.[3]

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[1] See the second editorial note, p. 1181.

[2] For full documentation on the origins of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), see volume XII.

The record of a telephone conversation between Dulles and Makins at 11:42 a. m., Mar. 29, read as follows: "The Sec. returned his [Makins'] call, and Sir Roger said he reported his talk with the Sec. on Saturday [Mar. 27] and he had received a message from London raising the point that 'possibility of joint action' would not mean that we are saying they are committed to joint military action. The Sec. said it was clear it would not." (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations")

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[3] For documentation on the question of recognition of the People's Republic of China, see vol. III, pp. 620 ff.

Editorial Note

According to the President's appointment book, President Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon met with Republican Congressional leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Knowland and Speaker of the House Martin, at 8:30 a.m., March 29, 1954. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments") The record of this meeting prepared by L. Arthur Minnich, Jr., Assistant Staff Secretary to the President, provides no indication that Indochina was discussed. (Eisenhower Library, Whitman file) However, Richard Nixon, in an apparent reference to this session, recalled the following: "At a congressional leadership meeting at the end of March, Eisenhower said that if the military situation at Dien Bien Phu became desperate he would consider the use of diversionary tactics, possibly a landing by Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces on China's Hainan Island or a naval blockade of the Chinese mainland. Very simply, but dramatically, he said, 'I am bringing this up at this time because at any time within the space of forty-eight hours, it might be necessary to move into the battle of Dien Bien Phu in order to keep it from going against us, and in that case I will be calling in the Democrats as well as our Republican leaders to inform them of the actions we're taking.'" (Richard Nixon, *R.N.: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), page 151)

Editorial Note

On March 29, 1954, John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, delivered an address on "The Threat of a Red Asia" before the Overseas Press Club of America, at New York. The Secretary outlined the position of the administration with regard to Indochina and also Communist China. He reaffirmed the support of the United States for the struggle being waged by French Union forces in Indochina and described the Viet Minh as a component part of the Communist imperialist movement headed by the Soviet Union and Communist China. He stated that should the Viet Minh achieve military or political success, they "would subject the people to a cruel Communist dictatorship taking its orders from Peiping and Moscow." The Secretary further contended that "If Communist forces won uncontested control over Indochina or any substantial part thereof, they would surely resume the same pattern of aggression against other free peoples in the area."

Secretary Dulles cited recent statements by United States officials designed to deter Communist aggression and stated the following for the purpose of further clarifying the position of the United States:

> "Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now if we dare not be resolute today."

For the full text of the address, Department of State Press Release No. 165, see Department of State *Bulletin*, April 12, 1954, pages 539–542. Regarding the speech, see also telegram 689 to London, August 3, 1954, page 1915.

S/P–NSC files, lot 62 D 1, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay) to the NSC Planning Board

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, March 29, 1954.

Subject: U.S. Policies with Respect to Certain Contingencies in Indochina

References: A. NSC 5405 [1]
B. NSC Actions 1019–*b*, 1074 [2]
C. Memo for Planning Board, March 26, 1954 [3]

The enclosed Special Annex on Indochina, originally distributed December 31, 1953, and subsequently recalled, is re-circulated in a limited number of copies for the use of the Planning Board in its current consideration of the subject.

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[1] Dated Jan. 16; for extracts, see p. 971.

[2] NSC Action No. 1019 is included in extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 181st Meeting of the National Security Council, Jan. 21, p. 986. For Action No. 1074, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 190th Meeting of the Council, Mar. 25, p. 1163.

[3] Reference is to a memorandum by NSC Executive Secretary Lay to the NSC Planning Board, Mar. 26, transmitting a list of points made in Council discussion and an analysis of the problem by General Cutler, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The memorandum and its enclosure are not printed. (S/P–NSC files, lot 62 D 1, "Indochina")

It is requested that special security precautions be observed in the handling of the enclosure and that access to it be very strictly limited on an absolute need-to-know basis. All copies of the enclosure will be recalled when the Planning Board completes its work on the subject.

JAMES S. LAY, JR.

[Enclosure]

SPECIAL ANNEX
ON
INDOCHINA[4]

FIRST CONTINGENCY

1. If it is determined that in the absence of an offer of U.S. military participation the French would seek to conclude the struggle on terms likely to result in the loss of Indochina to the Communists, the United States should:

Alternative One

[Refuse to commit U.S. forces to the French military effort, accepting the probable loss to the Communists of Indochina, and the necessity for expanded U.S. efforts to prevent the loss of the remainder of Southeast Asia.][5]

Alternative Two

[Offer U.S. service forces, and if necessary combat forces, subject to mutually acceptable command and strategy agreements, for use in Indochina to prevent the loss of that country to the communists.]

2. In considering any offer of direct U.S. military participation in the French military effort account must be taken of:

a. The risk of large-scale Chinese Communist intervention and of the anti-colonial reactions of countries in the Near and Far East; and

b. The probability that the timely communication to the French and Vietnamese of a U.S. decision to intervene would prevent their reaching a decision to negotiate on unacceptable terms or abandon their present military effort. Because of this probability, the United States should make the fundamental choice between the alternatives in paragraph 1 above, as far as possible in advance of such a decision by the French or Vietnamese.

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[4] This paper was originally prepared as a special annex to NSC 177 (renumbered NSC 5405). It was recalled as the result of action taken at the 179th Meeting of the National Security Council, Jan. 8; for extracts from the memorandum of discussion at that meeting, see p. 947.

[5] Brackets throughout this document are in the source text.

c. Availability of U.S. forces at the time. (See Enclosure B)[6]

3. If a decision is made to participate with U.S. forces in the French military effort and the French agree to continue the war under these circumstances, the United States should:

a. Seek the perfecting of the independence of the Associated States on terms which would be acceptable to them and to the French, and which would provide maximum safeguards against communist domination.

b. Insist upon the most rapid build-up of indigenous forces and participate in training these forces by providing U.S. officers and equipment either in Indochina or in nearby suitable areas.

c. Negotiate at the highest level the necessary command arrangements.

d. Insist upon maintenance of at least the present level of French forces in the joint effort.

e. Continue necessary U.S. assistance and support.

f. Provide sufficient U.S. forces to make possible the success of the joint effort.

g. Take all diplomatic and political actions which will assist in making clear the purpose of the defense effort and facilitate its success.

h. Explore with the French the desirability of internationalizing the conflict.

4. If the U.S. and French governments should agree to internationalize the conflict, the United States should seek either:

a. To organize a UN effort, possibly through appeal by the Associated States, or

b. To organize a regional effort outside the UN, including as many nations as possible, particularly the following: the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Burma, the Philippines, and possibly Nationalist China.

SECOND CONTINGENCY

5. If the French refuse to continue participation in the war in Indochina, despite all offers of U.S. assistance outlined above, the United States should:

Alternative One

[Refuse to commit U.S. forces to replace the French forces in Indochina, accepting the probable loss to the Communists of Indochina and the necessity for expanded U.S. efforts to prevent the loss of the remainder of Southeast Asia.]

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[6] Enclosure B, "Availability of United States Forces," is not printed.

Alternative Two

[Urge the French to phase their withdrawal to permit the implementation of one of the following alternatives (See Enclosure A for details):[7]

> *Alternative A*. Support and intensify the development of indigenous forces and deploy U.S. and Allied forces (ground, sea and air) to Indochina to undertake operations with the objective of reducing Communist activity to the status of scattered guerrilla bands.
>
> *Alternative B*. Support and intensify the development of indigenous forces; deploy sufficient U.S. and Allied ground forces to hold critical strong points vacated by the French; and provide air and naval support for such operations as may be taken until such time as indigenous forces can undertake the objective in Alternative A above.
>
> *Alternative C*. Support and intensify the development of indigenous forces and provide U.S. and Allied air and naval support for such operations as can be conducted by indigenous ground forces.
>
> *Alternative D*. Support and intensify the development of indigenous forces by U.S. supervision of training and provision of necessary logistic support for such operations as can be conducted by the indigenous forces.]

6. The following analysis of alternatives A to D above assumes:

a. There is no resumption of hostilities in Korea.

b. The Chinese Communists or Soviets do not intervene in force in Indochina.

c. Combat operations are limited to Indochina.

d. French Union forces will retain essentially their present positions, particularly in the Tonkin Delta, until the withdrawal of French forces from Indochina can be phased with U.S. force commitments. Furthermore, the French will comply with existing agreements concerning MDAP equipment and supplies furnished them in Indochina by the United States.

7. Any significant alteration in these assumptions could result in seriously jeopardizing the success of the alternatives. For example, the force requirements indicated in Enclosure A are based on the assumption that Communist China will not overtly intervene, but will continue a policy of covert assistance to the Viet Minh. However, overt Communist Chinese intervention is a distinct possibility, with which the United States must be prepared to cope should it occur. Logically, it follows that should overt Communist Chinese intervention occur, the United States will be faced with a radically altered military situation in the Far East. Such a possibility would precipitate a situation not unlike that of renewed Communist aggression in Korea. Under

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[7] Enclosure A, "Detailed Consideration of Alternatives A–D in Paragraph 5 of the Special Annex," is not printed.

such circumstances there is no suitable alternative to a course of action similar to that recommended by the Secretary of State and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in response to Council Action No. 972–*b*.[8]

8. The following political actions might be taken prior to or in conjunction with any one or a combination of the foregoing alternatives:

a. Reiterate a previous warning that should the Chinese Communists overtly intervene in Indochina, the United States can be expected to take retaliatory action which might not be confined to Indochina.

b. Seek to obtain UN action to include force contributions in Indochina similar to that taken with regard to Korea, with the provision that the United States be designated executive agent.

c. Seek to organize a regional effort outside the UN including as many nations as possible, particularly the following: the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Burma, the Philippines and possibly Nationalist China.

9. The four alternatives outlined above possess the following advantages and disadvantages.

a. Alternative A is the most positive and offers the greatest assurance of success. Its disadvantages include an increased calculated risk adversely affecting war plans, major alterations in fiscal and budgetary policies and programs, major increases in military production and mobilization schedules, and a reversal of policy planning to reduce the size of the U.S. Armed Forces. The deployment of U.S. troops in accordance with present policies and commitments limits the number of forces readily available to 5 divisions (including the 2 divisions scheduled for redeployment from Korea in March, 1954), whereas 7 divisions are required for a successful implementation of Alternative A.

b. Alternative B, if resolutely prosecuted, probably offers some chance for success, although considerably less than Alternative A. Alternative B would be satisfactory as a temporary measure, provided that the United States was prepared to follow through with Alternative A, if necessary to succeed in denying Indochina to Communism. Alternative B requires retention of present forces, and increases in military production, and re-examination of fiscal and budgetary policies and programs; but less adversely affects war plans than Alternative A above. Furthermore, it can readily result in a continuing stalemate similar to Korea.

c. Alternative C has relatively simple logistic problems. At best, it provides very questionable assurances of success and would likely result in a military defeat.

d. Alternative D is even weaker than Alternative C and would very likely result in a military defeat.

e. Whether Alternative A, B or C is initially adopted, if U.S. forces engage in combat in Indochina, the United States must be prepared to commit whatever forces are necessary to insure military success.

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[8] In NSC Action No. 972–*b*, taken by the NSC at its 173d Meeting, Dec. 3, 1953, the Secretary of State and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were directed to prepare a statement of military objectives and courses of action in the event that hostilities were renewed in Korea by the Communists. At its 179th Meeting, Jan. 8, 1954, the Council approved the State–JCS recommendations. For documentation on this subject, see volume xv.

651.51H/3-3054

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 30, 1954.

I said to the British Ambassador that I thought we would want to have a talk with him shortly about Indochina and the possibility of a joint position vis-à-vis the French. I said that the central paragraph of my address of last night was based on a unanimous position paper of our JCS, who took a very serious view of the situation.[2] I feared that unless there was a clear U.K.-U.S. position, the French would in fact sell out in Indochina, and that the entire area of Southeast Asia would be greatly endangered, with serious consequences to both of our countries and to Australia and New Zealand.

The British Ambassador said that he would be glad to have such a talk; that he had been seeking guidance from London, but had not yet received it. He suggested, however, that we might have a meeting on Friday.[3] I said I thought this would be OK.

J[OHN] F[OSTER] D[ULLES]

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[1] This memorandum was directed to Assistant Secretary Merchant and to Counselor MacArthur. A handwritten notation on the source text indicates that copies were sent to Assistant Secretary Robertson and to U. Alexis Johnson, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State who was on detail as coordinator of preparations for the Geneva Conference. Dulles prepared a second short memorandum on this meeting, sent to the same individuals, recording discussion with Makins regarding the Geneva Conference. For text, see vol. XVI, p. 487. According to the log of the Secretary's daily meetings, this session occurred at 2:15 p. m. and was followed by a meeting between Makins, Dulles, and President Eisenhower. (Princeton University, Dulles papers, "Daily Appointments") The President's appointment book confirms that the three individuals did hold an off-the-record conversation at the White House at 2:30 p. m. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments")

[2] Regarding the address by Secretary Dulles on Mar. 29, see the second editorial note, p. 1181. The position paper by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which is under reference here has not been positively identified. It is possibly the JCS memorandum to the Secretary of Defense of Mar. 12 titled "Preparation of Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiations on Indochina for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference," which was transmitted by Secretary of Defense Wilson to Secretary of State Dulles by letter of Mar. 23. For texts of the letter and the enclosure memorandum, see vol. XVI, p. 471.

[3] Apr. 2.

751G.00/3-3054

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Elbrick)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 30, 1954.

Participants: Mr. Leslie Munro—Ambassador of New Zealand
Mr. G. R. Laking—Counselor, New Zealand Embassy
The Secretary
C. Burke Elbrick—Deputy Assistant Secretary, EUR

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[1] This conversation was summarized in telegram 129 to Wellington, Apr. 1, repeated to Canberra as 159. (751G.00/4-154)

[Here follows a brief discussion on subjects other than Indochina.]

The Ambassador then inquired concerning recent events in Indochina. The Secretary outlined at length the measures which this Government has taken to aid the French, noting specifically that the Navarre Plan (involving annual U.S. expenditures of over a billion dollars in money and matériel) was designed to permit the Indochinese indigenous forces ultimately to take over the prosecution of the war against the Viet Minh guerrilla forces, once the back of the Viet Minh had been broken. The Plan was predicated on political negotiations between France and the Associated States which would result in the latter's independence in accordance with the French Government's declaration of last July. Unfortunately, while the French are very willing to accept our money and war materials, they would admit no outside assistance in the training of indigenous troops or the direction of military activities, or in the political negotiations with the Associated States.

The Secretary said that the Joint Chiefs of Staff particularly were greatly concerned over the state of affairs in Indochina and felt that failure of French Union forces to control the situation there would result in the eventual loss of all the Southeast Asian area and would be a direct threat to Australia and New Zealand. The Secretary said that he and the President shared this concern and that from talks held with General Ely here in Washington and from reports of conversations in Paris with Messrs. Pleven, Laniel and Bidault, it was apparent that the French were increasingly disposed "to sell out" in Indochina; he therefore felt that it was extremely important that the UK and the US make every effort to stiffen French resistance in Indochina. The Secretary had been disappointed at Eden's attitude when he had discussed this matter with him in Berlin and felt that Eden did not fully appreciate the dangers of this situation. The Secretary had informed British Ambassador Makins that he wished to discuss this problem again and Makins had indicated that he would seek instructions from his government and would probably be able to exchange views with the Secretary toward the end of this week. The Secretary said that the Australian and New Zealand governments would doubtless appreciate the dangers inherent in this situation and hoped that we could count on the support of those two governments in our efforts.

The Secretary said it is very important, because of the special relationship within ANZUS, to keep the Australian and New Zealand governments informed of developments in this situation, and Ambassador Munro expressed his appreciation. The Secretary said that it might be possible, following conversations with the British, to hold an informal, off-the-record ANZUS Council meeting for this purpose in the very near future.

751G.00/3-3054

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 30, 1954.

Subject: Secretary's Address of March 29, 1954, on Far East Problems.

Participants: Mr. Jean Daridan, Chargé d'Affaires, French Embassy.
Mr. MacArthur.
Mr. Galloway.

Mr. Daridan called on me this morning at his request to discuss "informally and off-the-record" several points.

He said he wondered if there were any clarification I could give him with respect to the Secretary's address of last night on Indochina regarding the position that the communization of Southeast Asia "should be met by united action". He had contemplated asking to see the Secretary, as he knew Paris would be much interested in the Secretary's statement, but since Ambassador Bonnet would be returning to Washington Friday [1] from Paris and would ask to see the Secretary following his return Friday, Daridan thought it was preferable for him not to seek an audience with the Secretary.

I replied to Mr. Daridan that I was not in a position to amplify the Secretary's remarks of last evening other than to say that the Secretary's speech made quite clear that the U.S. was not disposed to accept the loss of Southeast Asia to the Communists with resignation and fortitude. There were various possibilities of things which might be done, but I did not think it would be useful for me to engage with him in speculation on what particular courses of action the U.S. might follow.

Mr. Daridan then said that speaking on a purely personal and off-the-record basis, there was great fatigue in France over the Indochina war. People were tired of it, and there were pressures in the French Parliament and French Government to end it. Despite these pressures, he felt the French would think very carefully before they abandoned it to the Communists. He mentioned the advantage to the French economy of the dollars which we were pouring into France to support the Indochina war and the fact also that France's position of leadership in the world would be greatly impaired if the area were abandoned. However, the pressures for some kind of negotiation were very great, and he did not exclude in his own mind the possibility that at some juncture the French might come to us and say that they would be willing to continue the struggle in Indochina but only on the basis that we join with them actively in the war there.

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[1] Apr. 2.

751G.00/3–3154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT SAIGON, March 31, 1954—midnight.
[Received 1:47 a.m.]

1845. Repeated information Paris niact 590, Tokyo 61, Singapore 51, Manila 178, Hanoi 319. Viet Minh have commenced the second all-out attack on Dien Bien Phu. French Commissioner General DeJean has given us following details:

Weather yesterday was bad until 1800 hours, thus hampering French aviation. Enemy commenced violent artillery barrage on central redoubt at 1800 hours continuing until midnight. Positions "Dominique" and "Eliane" on east side of redoubt were attacked in force, presumably by elements of Viet Minh 315th and 316th Divisions. In heavy fighting, French lost three out of five strong points of position "Dominique", and two out of four strong points of position "Eliane". However, a counterattack this morning aided by artillery support from "Isabelle" resulted in recapture of one strong point in "Eliane". Preliminary reports indicate French lost between 1½ and 2 battalions of Algerians who defended "Dominique" and Moroccans defending "Eliane", plus elements of Vietnamese parachute companies who did splendid work in counterattack.

During this bloody night action, losses were exceedingly high on both sides. However, General Navarre as of 8 a.m. today, although regarding position as serious, does not yet feel it is critical. French were able during this early morning's counterattack to wipe out infiltrations around "Epervier" which at one time had threatened De Castries mobile reserve, which consists of three parachute battalions and ten tanks. However, DeJean admitted that French have lost four 105s and two 155s, although guns were spiked before falling in enemy hands.

Meanwhile, an active battle goes on as two outermost positions of "Huguette" apparently undertaken by elements of enemy 308th Division.

DeJean said that Navarre had three parachute battalions in reserve in Tonkin delta which might, if necessary, be used to reinforce Dien Bien Phu garrison. Weather today is good for flying.[1]

HEATH

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[1] In telegram 1848 from Saigon, Mar. 31, Ambassador Heath provided the following additional information:

"Regret to be forced to modify last sentence Embtel 1845. Unfortunately weather this morning has been bad and French have been unable up to 1100 hours to take off from Hanoi either by heavy bombers or drop missions although fighter bombers have been able to operate over battlefield and last night both B–26's and Privateers were engaged. Inability thus far to drop is of critical importance as it is Navarre's apparent intent to drop one or two parachute battalions and one additional battery of 105's or 75's today. In last night's battle French lost seven guns at central redoubt and six out of twelve guns at 'Isabelle'. If by nightfall today these reinforcements have not been made available to De Castries our military feel that Viet Minh may be able this night to overpower 'Eliane', which is hill position, and thus be in posture for a final assault. Navarre will then be faced with crucial decision whether to engage more forces or to fight it out to last man with what is left at Dien Bien Phu. Weather is still the vital element in this equation." (751G.00/3–3154)

651.51G/3–3154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET

SAIGON, March 31, 1954—4 p. m.
[Received 8:34 a. m.]

1846. Repeated information Paris 591, Hanoi 320. I saw Buu Loc yesterday following his return from consultation with Bao Dai.

1. He at first implied that the difference between French and Vietnamese points of view as to form of new accords now under negotiation in Paris was not great and he "hoped that present efforts to find a compromise formula would shortly be successful[”]. Later he expressed less optimism on the score and said rather belligerently that if French, specifically Mister Bidault, refused to accept Vietnamese thesis that there must be two distinct accords, the first one unqualifiedly granting full independence to Vietnam, and second expressing Vietnam's voluntary adherence to French Union, there would be no other course than to call Vietnamese Delegation back from Paris. He argued that Vietnamese thesis had long been known to French and was approved here by DeJean and was really in French interest. He expressed hope that Secretary of State, without going into question of former content of accords, would express to Bidault American hope that present negotiations would terminate and accords be signed before Geneva Conference. I said I would transmit his request.

2. With respect to Conference at Geneva, he was in quandary. He said what French obviously wanted was credible agreement from China that it would stop aiding Viet Minh. China would not give any

assurances on that score unless it received counter-advantages or yielded to menaces of action against it in case it refused stop aiding Ho. There was only one country in position to offer advantage or proffer menaces. That was US. He had understood that there would be great objection in US to any move to relax present restrictions on trade with China or to give it advantages even in return for Chinese promises to desist from aiding Ho. Perhaps if French Government could promise US that it would ratify EDC if US would persuade China to stop aid to Ho, American Government might consider making such "concessions" to China. But Buu Loc did not believe that present French Government could make good on promise of French ratification of EDC.

I listened to these speculations on American attitude and policy without comment. Buu Loc went on to say that even if Chinese Government gave assurances it would not continue to support Viet Minh, these assurances would be valueless. Aid would continue but Chinese Government would pretend that it was result to [*of*] private contracts with Chinese or foreign businessmen, and it was beyond Chinese governmental power to keep it from passing across frontier.

Begin Noforn. Buu Loc said that he wanted to tell me in strictest confidence that personally he was unalterably opposed to Vietnamese Delegation sitting down at conference table with Viet Minh Delegation, thereby extending to latter a sort of political recognition. He would resign as Chief of Government rather than preside or send such delegation. In fact, he had told Bao Dai when latter had entrusted him with forming government that his only condition was that he would not have to negotiate with Viet Minh. While that was his personal feeling now, he was very careful not to say so to Bidault because Bidault might well seize on such a statement as a pretext for either complicating or termination present negotiations in Paris or negotiating with Ho Chi Minh without consultation with Vietnamese Government. Buu Loc then qualified his objection to Vietnamese representation at Geneva Conference by saying that unforeseen developments might make it necessary or advisable for Vietnam to send a delegation to Geneva, if invited to do so. In that case government would send strongest, most representative delegation, including representatives of all political groups and the sects. *End Noforn.*

3. With regard to his announcement of formation of National Assembly,[1] he could not enlarge on that at present for several reasons. First of all important thing was of course, not National Assembly but formation of a war Cabinet to insure a more determined and efficient

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[1] Upon his return to Saigon on Mar. 29 having conferred with Bao Dai at Dalat, Buu Loc announced the formation of a "war cabinet" consisting of certain ministers and the Army Chief of Staff. He also announced the immediate beginning of planning for the convening of a national assembly, the nature and powers of which he did not specify. (Joint Weeka No. 14, Apr. 4, 1954; 751G.00(W)/4–454)

prosecution of war. Formation of Assembly must come as secondary step and whatever powers it might be entrusted with must not be allowed to interfere with powers of war Cabinet or interfere with prosecution of war. In any case, he could not form a National Assembly until he had settled his difficulties with Cao Daists and that might not be easy since matter had very great pretentions. He could form a government without Cao Daists participation but a National Assembly without such participation was unthinkable. He had less worries about coming to terms with Hoa Haos.

He could hardly come to terms with Cao Daists, however, without French support. Fact was that since 1947 Cao Daist auxiliary troops had been under French command and paid by latter. French must stop paying these auxiliary troops and turn them over to Vietnamese National Army for pay and command. Buu Loc added that Vietnamese budget could hardly be stretched to take on this extra expense and it might be necessary for France and/or US to turn over to Vietnam Government money they were now paying Cao Dai troops.

4. I said to Buu Loc that we had been much struck with his promise to punish and prosecute grafts in government aid. I thought that successful prosecution of proven cases of corruption would be well received in country and enhance popularity of his government. Buu Loc said that he thoroughly agreed and he had not renounced this ambition but it was no good punishing a score or so of petty officials; what was needed would be conviction of three or four highly placed grafters in previous governments. That would be very difficult indeed to do—but not impossible, he said. He added that he might take a leaf out of the Egyptian book and proceed against wives of these formerly highly placed individuals in whose names proceeds of peculations have usually been placed. *Comment:* Buu Loc refused to specify any accusations but it is legitimate to assume that he had in mind common law wife of former Prime Minister Tam, who is frequently locally referred to as "Queen of Blackmarket".

HEATH

751G.00/3–3154 : Telegram

The Ambassador in India (Allen) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PRIORITY NEW DELHI, March 31, 1954—8 p. m.
[Received 5 : 52 p. m.]

1487. Pillai [1] asked me to call today to let me know that Indian press reports of Secretary's Overseas Press Club speech calling for "united action by the free world to meet the Communist threat in southeast

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[1] N. R. Pillai, Secretary General, Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

Asia" has caused some Indian officials to believe US intends to call on various nations to supply fighting forces for Indochina if Geneva conference does not achieve settlement in that area. He said one interpretation was that US would ask UK, France, Australia, and other powers to join us in declaring Monroe Doctrine for southeast Asia. Pillai said he was afraid these officials would present their interpretation to Nehru when he returns to Delhi tomorrow from brief visit to Jaipur, and that Nehru might make some rash and "unhelpful" statement unless he (Pillai) could give him contrary interpretation. Pillai summarized situation by saying that these Indian officials were reading into Secretary's speech a threat that we would create second Korea in Indochina if Geneva conference failed.

I said I saw no basis for this interpretation whatever. I thought Secretary was reiterating well-known American policy of collective security and was in no way altering President Eisenhower's declaration that US did not intend to send fighting forces to Indochina. I expressed confidence that if Chinese Communist troops moved in to support Ho Chi Minh, direct consequences would result, with fighting not limited to Indochina, but that US had no intention of starting any aggressive move.

Pillai said he welcomed my interpretation and would place it before Prime Minister early on his return. He added that if I could obtain confirmation from Washington, his hand would be even more strengthened.

Comment: I was astonished at interpretation Pillai reported and can only surmise that troublemakers like Krishna Menon,[2] who just returned, are responsible.

ALLEN

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[2] V. K. Krishna Menon, Member of Parliament; Indian High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, 1947–1952; a frequent Indian participant in deliberations of organs of the United Nations.

751H.00/3–3154

Memorandum by the Special Assistant for Intelligence (Armstrong) to the Secretary of State

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 31, 1954.

Subject: Intelligence Note: *Viet Minh Creates a "Resistance Government" in Cambodia*

Recent Viet Minh broadcasts have referred to the existence of a "Khmer Resistance Government." This apparent attempt to manufacture a Communist government in Cambodia parallels the earlier Communist creation of a "Resistance Government" in Laos and raises the possibility that the Communists, at Geneva, may sponsor the participation of three Communist "governments" in Indochina.

On March 20, the Viet Minh radio broadcast a "declaration of the Foreign Minister of the Khmer Resistance Government" protesting US aid to the French in Indochina. Signed by one Keomani, the declaration asserted: "The Khmer people . . . recognize only the Khmer Resistance Government as the Government which represents all the Nation and people of Khmer." [1]

This is the first known Communist reference to a "Resistance Government of Khmer, or Cambodia. A March 24 commentary by the Ho radio on the above "Declaration" used the term "Khmer Resistance Government" four times and left no doubt of the Viet Minh intention to advertise the "existence" of a Communist "government" in Cambodia.

As recently as February 14, the Viet Minh arm in Cambodia was still referred to as the "Cambodian Committee of National Liberation." Son Ngoc Minh, identified in the March 20 DRV broadcast as "President" of the "Khmer Resistance Government," was formerly identified as chairman of the "Committee of National Liberation." Keomani (possibly known also as Keo Mas), here designated as "Foreign Minister" of the "Resistance Government," is a prominent Cambodian Communist who served as Cambodian delegate to the Vienna Peace Congress in December 1952.

W. PARK ARMSTRONG, JR.

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[1] Ellipsis in the source text.

PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina"

Memorandum by Charles C. Stelle to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] March 31, 1954.

Subject: Prospects for a Regional Grouping to Support Action in Indochina [1]

1. *General*

A U.S. decision that in the last analysis it would commit its forces into Indochina to prevent the loss of that area to the Communists, if accompanied by U.S. willingness to undertake long term commitments for the defense of Thailand and Malaya, would provide a basis on which a regional grouping for Southeast Asia could be constructed. No one of the countries of the area would accept a regional organization that entailed military commitments if the U.S. were not committed to military participation. But a clear U.S. commitment to employ its own forces in defense of Indochina, Thailand, and Malaya would provide cement for an alliance.

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[1] For documentation on the formation of a regional grouping in Southeast Asia, see volume XII.

2. *Australia and New Zealand*

Australia and New Zealand treasure their association with the U.S. in ANZUS. They would not be happy to have this organization diluted by expansion. Nevertheless their interest in the defense of Southeast Asia, together with the embarrassments which U.K. exclusion from ANZUS has occasioned them, would probably lead them to acquiesce in expansion of ANZUS to include both the U.K. and mainland countries of Southeast Asia. They would support military operations by such a regional organization in Indochina, always provided the U.S. bore the major military burden.

3. *U.K.*

The U.K. is already irked by its exclusion from ANZUS. The U.K. has direct interests in Malaya and the stability of Southeast Asia. The U.K. is disposed to be benevolent towards the idea of local U.S. armed intervention in Indochina, if absolutely necessary. In return for a U.S. guarantee of Malaya, the U.K. would probably be more than willing to participate in a regional grouping of Southeast Asia, and to give token support to U.S. military action in Indochina under the aegis of such an organization.

4. *France*

The French would far prefer a solution in Indochina which did not involve U.S. military intervention under any aegis. If U.S. intervention were indispensable they would probably prefer to have the U.S. alone. If the French were assured, however, that there were no way out of their Indochina difficulty except through participation in a regional organization, they would prefer such a way out to a U.N. sponsorship of the Associated States. The French would probably reluctantly go along with participation in a regional organization, but would expect, in due course to slough off their Indochinese responsibilities on such an organization.

5. *Associated States*

The Associated States, although fearful of the possibilities of Chinese Communist intervention, would on balance welcome U.S. military participation in Indochina under any auspices. They would expect such participation to bring victory over the Vietminh and to strengthen their own position against the French. They would probably prefer U.N. sponsorship of U.S. military participation, but would be more than willing to participate with the U.S. and the other "white" and mainland countries in a Southeast Asia organization which would bring them U.S. military support.

6. *Philippines*

The Philippines are reluctant to assume the responsibility for leadership in organizing Southeast Asia, but would readily go along with a U.S. effort in that direction in the light of a U.S. decision to commit its own military resources to the Southeast Asian mainland. The Philippines would probably give at least token military support to action in Indochina.

7. *Thailand*

If a Southeast Asia grouping were constructed, Thailand would seek lasting guarantees from the U.S. In return for such guarantees the Thais would participate in a regional organization, would make available bases and facilities for U.S. military operations in Indochina, and would possibly provide token military forces.

8. *Neutralists*

Burma, Indonesia, Ceylon and India would for the foreseeable future abstain from any U.S. sponsored regional organization which had military implications.

9. *Formosa and Korea*

The Chinese Government on Formosa would seek admission to a regional organization in the hope that military action in Indochina would lead to a general war with Communist China and the possibility of Nationalist restoration to the mainland. Similarly the ROK would favor an organization which would undertake military action in Indochina, in the hope that such action would lead to the reopening of hostilities in Korea. President Rhee would undoubtedly feel that his possibilities of involving the U.S. in renewed Korean hostilities would be materially enhanced by U.S. military operations in Indochina, and would look with favor on anything which seemed to lead to this end. Both the Chinese Nationalists and the Koreans would, therefore, attempt to stimulate the extension of any operations which the U.S. initiated in Indochina, whereas the other potential members of a Southeast Asian organization would strongly favor localization of hostilities.

10. *Japan*

The Japanese would not feel that they could materially contribute to or benefit from a Southeast Asian organization. They would probably not actively seek admission, but would give unenthusiastic support to such an organization.

Conclusion: A U.S. decision to commit forces into Indochina if necessary would make possible construction of a Southeast Asia Organization (SEATO?). Such a decision would have to be accompanied by U.S. willingness to undertake long term commitments for defense of Thailand and Malaya, which would, however, be implicit in the first U.S. decision. In such circumstances it would be possible to secure the adherence of Australia, New Zealand, the U.K., France, the Associated States, Thailand, and the Philippines in an organization devoted to local defense of Southeast Asia. Formosa and Korea would want to join, but with the hope of expanding any hostilities that might occur. Japan would give unenthusiastic support. The neutralist countries would abstain. ANZUS might be expanded to encompass the larger group, although there would be no material obstacles to creation of a new organization.

Radford papers, Indochina papers/Geneva Conference

Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 31 March 1954.

Subject: Indo China Situation.

1. In view of the critical situation in Indo China (Dien Bien Phu) the Chairman today called a special meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Commandant of the Marine Corps was present) to ascertain their individual views as to the necessity or desirability of recommending to the Secretary of Defense and/or the President that an immediate offer of assistance by U.S. Naval Air and/or Air Force units be made to the French.

2. The individual Service Chiefs and the Commandant of the Marine Corps unanimously recommended against such an offer at this time.

3. The Chairman is of the opinion that such an offer should be made.

4. Copies of this memorandum have been provided only to General

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[1] The source text was accompanied in the files by a handwritten note by Admiral Radford, which read as follows:

"Should JCS recommend to Sec Def and/or The President that offer be made to French to render assistance (as practicable from carriers or AF units) in connection with action at Dien Bien Phu.

"1. Ridgway—no
"2. Carney—no
"3. Twining—not unless Chinese intervene (no)
"4. Shepherd—not unless Chinese intervene (no)

"Record of action in Chairman's Office during meeting of JCS at 1330 31 March.
"Top Secret.
"My personal files. R[adford]
"Above action confirmed by official memo to Sec. Def."

Twining, General Ridgway, Admiral Carney, and General Shepherd on an "Eyes Only" basis.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:
ARTHUR RADFORD
Chairman

751G.00/4–154 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, April 1, 1954—4 p. m.
[Received March 31—11:30 p. m.]

3614. Reference Deptel 3353.[1] Your speech on Indochina received very wide publicity here, and I feel that it has done much to clear French thinking. It made clear to all that there can be no settlement in Indochina bought by United States' concessions to Communist China.

This aspect of your speech was, however, somewhat overshadowed by the interest in your statement regarding "united action" which has been editorially interpreted to mean that the United States, in the event of failure at Geneva, would be prepared to intervene in Indochina with military force.

We have had speech translated and distributed.

I am sure that Bidault fully comprehends the problem. The pressure for United States' concessions comes mainly from those sources who all along have been in favor of French withdrawal. I have in mind the Socialists and such members of the government as Faure and Reynaud. I am afraid that this group will continue to push for United States' concessions and if these are not forthcoming will attempt to blame the United States for the failure of the Geneva Conference and thereby open way for request that United States take over the burden of the fighting in Indochina.

DILLON

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[1] Telegram 3353 to Paris, Mar. 27, expressed the concern of the Department of State regarding "what appear to be growing expectations in France that Geneva will produce a settlement for Indochina as a result of US concessions to Communist China." For text of telegram 3353, see vol. XVI, p. 485.

751G.00/4–154 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT SAIGON, April 1, 1954—1 p. m.
[Received 3:24 a. m.]

1852. Sent Paris niact 597, Hanoi niact 324, Manila niact 183, Tokyo niact 64, repeated information Singapore 53. De Jean has just received following telephone report on Dien-Bien-Phu from General Navarre:

There was no general assault last night. However, at 2330 hours enemy attacked position II in south portion of "Eliane" and now occupies half this vital spot with French contesting its possession. Yesterday, although French retook two positions in "Dominique," they were later forced to withdraw. Situation, therefore, remains as at end of yesterday's fight—that Viet Minh have three positions in "Dominique" and one and one-half in "Eliane."

Rate of Viet Minh artillery fire has greatly increased and ack-ack activity is not only greater in volume but more deadly in effect. Result has been that French drop aircraft have been forced to high altitudes while at same time enemy encirclement between "Isabelle" and main redoubt has greatly reduced size of available drop area. In consequence, drop of ammunition yesterday in fairly strong wind resulted in half of these supplies landing in enemy hands. Lack of aircraft made it impossible to drop reinforcing parachute battalion which still remains at Hanoi.

De Castries reports that his men are growing exceedingly weary and that without fresh reinforcements position looks very black. French losses now total three battalions with 1,300 dead. Issue thus seems to boil down to (*a*) weather, (*b*) availability of transport aircraft, and (*c*) whatever strategic reserve Navarre can provide garrison at Dien-Bien-Phu. De Jean confirms that Navarre's reserve consists of three battalions.

De Jean this morning said that issue now depends upon hours and days. He asked if through some miracle we could send more C–47s. We requested him to ascertain precise number needed and said that we would urge with most sober insistence that by hook or crook more C–47s be sent instantly this theatre. De Jean was relieved when we told him that first increment of B–26s are now in Clark Field and should be on hand shortly. We understand that French now only have 22 B–26s in operation.

De Jean is flying Hanoi this afternoon.

De Jean has just telephoned indicating number of C–47s instantly required is 18.

HEATH

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 191st Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, April 1, 1954 [1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

The following were present at the 191st meeting of the Council: The President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Acting Secretary of Agriculture (for Item 1); Mr. Anderson for the Secretary of Commerce (for Items 1 and 6); the Acting Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Council of Economic Advisers (for Item 1); the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Mr. Davis, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture (for Items 1 and 6); Mr. Clarence Francis, Special Consultant to the President (for Item 1); Lieut. Everhart, USNR, Department of Defense (for Item 4); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Acting Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Mr. Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the Deputy Assistant to the President; the Acting White House Staff Secretary; Mr. Harlow, Administrative Assistant to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Apr. 2.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting, together with the chief points taken.

. . . .

4. *Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security*

Admiral Radford announced that he had invited Lieutenant Everhart, USNR, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to provide the Council with a briefing on the military situation at Dien Bien Phu.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Lieutenant Everhart answered various questions, and Admiral Radford pointed out that in the last two days many airdrops of French supplies had fallen into the hands of the Vietminh, which presented a serious problem for the garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Unless this garrison were reinforced, Admiral Radford saw no way to save the situation.

The President said that he understood that the reserves available to General Cogny consisted of three parachute battalions. Admiral Radford replied that this was the case, and the President went on to say that he still couldn't understand this military action. Why had the French ever committed forces to a remote area where these forces could not be reinforced? Nevertheless, the plight of the French certainly raised the question whether the United States ought now to consider any kind of intervention to help save Dien Bien Phu. He understood, said the President, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff, except for the Chairman, were opposed to an airstrike using U.S. planes and pilots.[2] This was certainly a question for "statesmen", and while the President said he could see a thousand variants in the equation and very terrible risks, there was no reason for the Council to avoid considering the intervention issue.

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[2] See memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, Mar. 31, p. 1198.

The Secretary of State asked whether there was anything we could do in time to save the French at Dien Bien Phu. Admiral Radford replied that some help could be got to them by U.S. forces as early as tomorrow morning if the decision were made. The President, however, said that he would let the subject drop for the moment but would meet with certain of the members of the National Security Council in his own office at the conclusion of the Council meeting. (Copy of Mr. Cutler's notes on this meeting filed with the Minutes.)[3]

The National Security Council:

a. Noted and discussed oral briefings by a representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and by the Acting Director of Central Intelligence on the military situation in Indochina.

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[3] No record of the meeting under reference has been found in Department of State files or at the Eisenhower Library. (The "minutes" have also not been identified.) The records of the Secretary of State's phone calls on the afternoon of Apr. 1 provide the following information: At 2:27 p.m., Dulles informed Attorney General Brownell that something fairly serious had come up after the morning NSC meeting. Dulles was working on it with Legal Adviser Phleger. Dulles indicated that if there was to be a meeting with Congressional leaders the following day, he would like to have something to show them. At 2:54 p.m., Dulles informed the President that he was going ahead with arrangements for a Congressional meeting on the following day. He would have a draft to show the President in the morning. At 3:01 p.m., Dulles told Admiral Radford that he was going ahead with the meeting and had confirmed the matter with the President. Radford pointed out that time was a factor, that the President might be criticized for not doing something in advance should a disaster occur. It was agreed that a meeting would be held on Apr. 2 if feasible, otherwise on Apr. 3. Secretary Dulles said that it was necessary to consider methods for restraining the Chinese Communists by means of air and sea power. Dulles and Radford agreed that Congress must be convinced that the job which the Administration wanted to do could be done without sending manpower to Asia. Admiral Radford said that he didn't know whether the President wanted him to explain what steps had been already taken. FOA Director Stassen called Secretary Dulles at 5:55 p.m. to discuss forthcoming Congressional testimony by the Secretary regarding the Mutual Security Program. Stassen suggested that Dulles point out that in 1953 and 1954, for the first time in seven years, no territory had gone under Communist domination. The Secretary said to watch out, that Indochina might go under. (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations")

790.5/4–154: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 1, 1954—11:49 a.m.

5090. FYI We were disturbed at Berlin by Eden's position on Indochina which was in effect that this was problem between US and

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[1] Drafted by Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Department, and Robert McBride, the Officer in Charge of French-Iberian Affairs. Repeated for information to Paris as telegram 3418 and to Saigon as telegram 1821.

France, with UK standing on sidelines as an uninterested party, situation which actually encouraged French seek negotiated settlement.[2] This was not only unhelpful but unrealistic, since if Indochina goes, Malaya, Australia, and New Zealand will be directly threatened (areas where UK has definite responsibilities), as will be Burma, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, and over period of time Japan and whole offshore island chain.

It seems to us one of best ways keep French from taking any steps which might prove disastrous re Indochina is for US and UK have solid alignment and let French know we will not only not be party to but will actively oppose any solution of any kind which directly or indirectly in near future or over period of time could lead to loss Indochina to Communists. To bring UK to greater recognition its own responsibilities, we are talking very frankly to Australians and New Zealanders here regarding problem (which involves their vital security) in hope they will press British stand firmly with us on above fundamental principles. Secretary also is calling in Makins (who is absent from town) April 2 and will impress upon him forcefully our views. End FYI.

With above in mind and following Secretary's talk with Makins which will be reported to you, you should see Eden and reiterate to him our position along following lines:

1. We clearly understood from Bidault at Berlin that our agreement to discuss Indochina at Geneva was on condition France would not agree to any arrangement which would directly or indirectly result turnover area to Communists. We presume British because of vital security interests in area as well as their role in free world would solidly support this position.

2. Our views on any special position for Communist China at Geneva have already been made clear (Deptel 4982 repeated Paris as 3340).[3]

3. Our basic position on Communist China is contained in Secretary's March 29 speech of which you should give copy to Eden if you have not already, particularly emphasizing eighth paragraph from end in which is contained following sentence: "We shall not however be disposed to give Communist China what it wants from us merely to buy its promises of future good behavior."

4. Insofar as development US position is concerned, our preliminary views on substance and procedure contained numbered paragraphs 1 and 2 Deptel 3401 to Paris (repeated London 5067, Saigon 1814)[4] and these views should also be conveyed Eden.

5. We believe it essential at this time have understanding above basic points on which we would hope for strong British support with French.

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[2] For Eden's account of U.S.-U.K.-French discussions regarding Indochina during the period January–April 1954, see Sir Anthony Eden (Lord Avon), *Full Circle* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1960), pp. 96–124.

[3] For text of telegram 4982 to London, Mar. 26, see vol. XVI, p. 484.

[4] For text of telegram 3401 to Paris, Mar. 31, see *ibid.*, p. 491.

6. Re foregoing, Deptel 3353 to Paris repeated London as 5079 also provides further guidance.[5]

DULLES

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[5] For text of telegram 3353 to Paris, Mar. 27, see vol. XVI, p. 485.

Eisenhower Library, James C. Hagerty papers

Hagerty Diary, April 1, 1954

[Extract]

[WASHINGTON, undated.]

. . . .

Indo China situation getting really bad. French want more help from us, but want it at their terms—refuse to let us train locals or send in American troops on long term basis—feel that would hurt what they call "French prestige"—at luncheon at W. H. with Pres, Roy Howard[1] and Walker Stone,[2] Pres. expounded on problem—said US might have to make decision to send in squadrons from 2 aircraft carriers off coast to bomb Reds at Dien Bien Phu—"of course, if we did, we'd have to deny it forever."—French very difficult to handle—almost impossible.

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[1] Roy W. Howard, editor and president of the New York *World Telegram and Sun*; Chairman of the Executive Committee and Director of Scripps-Howard Newspapers.

[2] Editor in Chief, Scripps-Howard Newspapers.

396.1 GE/4–154 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Australia[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 1, 1954—8:06 p. m.

158. For the Ambassador. I have talked to Spender and to Munro on importance of stiffening French resistance to any negotiated settlement on Indochina in immediate future and will probably see them again next week.

Deptel 3353 of March 27 to Paris[2] outlines our concern over trend in France. As to UK we were disturbed at Berlin by Eden's position on Indochina which was in effect that this was problem between US and France, with the UK standing on the sidelines as an uninterested party, situation which actually encouraged French seek negotiated settlement. This was not only unhelpful but unrealistic, since if Indochina goes, Malaya, Australia and New Zealand will be directly threatened, as will be Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and over period of time Japan and whole off-shore island chain.

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[1] Drafted by Outerbridge Horsey, Officer in Charge of Commonwealth Affairs. Also sent to Wellington as telegram 128.

[2] For text of telegram 3353 to Paris, Mar. 27, see vol. XVI, p. 485.

It seems to us one of best ways keep French from taking any steps which might prove disastrous re Indochina is for US and UK have solid alignment and let French know we will not only not be party to but will actively oppose any solution of any kind which directly or indirectly in near future or over period of time could lead to loss Indochina to Communists.

On position of Communist China at Geneva, we have told UK and French Embassies firmly and categorically we will not agree to any procedural arrangement which gives Communist China, directly or by implication, special position different from that of participants other than US, UK, France and USSR. In particular we would not agree to any proposal that Communist China would be consulted by US, UK, France or USSR re composition of Indochina phase of Geneva Conference. As practical matter we would expect that Soviets would in fact consult China but tripartite agreement at Berlin clearly would preclude any consultation with China by Western Big Three since in fact such consultation would give China a special status. We would reject any proposal, precedural or otherwise, which would give Communist China a special place or imply a "Five Power" concept.

Spender gave us paper on Australian participation in Indochina phase of Geneva Conference.[3] We are studying this, but do not expect decisions to be made on this and other procedural questions until after there has been further discussion with British and French. Decisions on Indochina phase may not be made until after Conference starts.

Guided by background in this telegram and others being repeated to you, as well as by my speech March 29, I hope you will take appropriate occasion to spell out our views in discussions with top officials (including Prime Minister) with view to their governments taking similar line with British. You should not, however, go so far as to request them formally to do so.

DULLES

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[3] The Australian paper, an *aide-mémoire* of Mar. 24, is not printed. (396.1 GE/3–2454) For text of the memorandum of Ambassador Spender's conversation with Deputy Under Secretary Murphy of that date, see vol. XVI, p. 480.

751G.5/4–154 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 1, 1954—8:10 p. m.

1831. Eyes only for Ambassador from Secretary. In facing critical period ahead in Indochina, I wish you to be fully prepared, so far as instructions from us are concerned, to meet all contingencies rapidly and effectively from point of view US interests. Without wishing to adopt alarmist attitude, one of these contingencies, remote I hope, would be one in which French decided to abandon struggle under conditions which confronted local Governments, especially that of Vietnam, with hard decision of either capitulating to Communists or of continuing struggle alone. I would not wish that decision to be taken by Government of Vietnam or of other Associated States until and unless US given opportunity of examining situation and determining extent to which by positive action we can insure continuance of struggle under favorable conditions.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA.

You are therefore authorized, should situation develop along lines indicated above and should opportunity not exist for full consultation with Department, to approach local Governments on basis of urgency, and, without making any specific commitment, urge them not to take any definite action until they and we have been able examine problem and are able determine measures which may be jointly undertaken in order prevent Communist takeover. You are further authorized to state, in event of situation envisaged, that decision will be made promptly at very highest level our Government which is most anxious assist in keeping area free.

DULLES

751G.00/4–154 : Despatch

The Deputy Chief of Mission at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET

SAIGON, April 1, 1954.

No. 423

Subject: Views of Vietnamese Chief of Staff on Current Political Situation

I desire supplement the telegram under reference[1] by reporting in greater detail comments made by General Nguyen Van Hinh, Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese armed forces, in an hour-long interview which took place at his headquarters on March 30.

General Hinh expressed profound disgust at the inability of the Vietnamese people to consolidate their efforts, not only in prosecuting the war against the Communist enemy, but in achieving a national unity which would enable them to preserve their independence, once it had been won on the field of battle. He drew a disturbing picture of rival factions, politicians whose interest in office was more pecuniary than patriotic; of rival confessional groups, each with a private army which served a dual purpose of securing exemption from military duty in the national armed forces and at the same time gave local satraps armed forces with which to exert influence; and of the bewildered peasantry, who only sought peace and had no national ideal toward which to set their sights.

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[1] This despatch cited as its reference telegram 1847 from Saigon, Mar. 31, not printed. (751G.00/3–3154)

General Hinh said that efforts to enforce conscription were met at every side by attempts at evasion. Not only had the Cao Daists, Hoa Haoists, and others secured exemptions from military service by enlistment in their own private armies, but persons of wealth and influence were able to buy their way out of military service. Furthermore, the swarm of bureaucracies in Saigon and other towns provided havens for many young men who had better be in uniform. Morale in the army itself was at its nadir. Officers and men could scarcely feel an enthusiasm to fight at low pay when they knew that fat caps [*cats?*] in Saigon, exempt from military service, were keeping garages of two and three automobiles and were making an average income of 300,000 piasters a month. Hinh said, "What I want to do is reduce each family to not more than one automobile and to take all income in excess of 5,000 piasters a month. I shall pay them back when the war is over."

General Hinh said that graft and corruption were so rampant, particularly in South Vietnam, that the enemy had no difficulty in securing any supplies he wished. He said that a study of the import statistics on bicycles alone, in contrast to the number of bicycles registered with the police, revealed that almost twice as many bicycles were in Vietnam as were registered. He was confident that these useful vehicles had been diverted to the enemy.

Furthermore, he said he had made an actual census of certain villages in Cochin-China with respect to the consumption of sugar and had found that if indeed the inhabitants were eating that much sugar, it must have been at the rate of three kilos per day per capita. It was perfectly obvious that this commodity was going over to the enemy. Hinh likewise inveighed against the open sale of export licenses to interested politicians and such confessional groups as the Cao Daists. He said an export license for 10,000 tons of rice was worth 1,000,000 piasters in the open market, and that the Chinese rice merchants could make a profit of 15,000,000 piasters on a 10,000 ton transaction. Hinh also claimed that rice from South Vietnam legitimately exported under license found its way by clandestine means to South China, where it was returned to Vietnam in the form of war supplies to the Vietminh. (I checked this last assertion with the director general of Denis Frères on the same evening of my conversation with General Hinh, and was told that such a transaction would be out of the question, not only because rice exports were fully documented, but also because at the current time with an excess production, there is no reason for Communist China to try by extraordinary means to find rice in Vietnam.)

It was obvious from his bitter comment on graft in Indochina, and particularly the sale of export licenses to the Cao Daist sect, that General Hinh was treading close to the toes of his father, former Prime Minister Tam, who on March 14 in Dalat had calmly told me that he had in fact as Prime Minister made available rice export licenses to the Cao Daists. Tam at that time said blandly, "It was very simple. The Cao Daists needed rice and money, but they did not have an export permit."

Hinh said very earnestly that, although he felt a natural filial affection for his father, if it came to placing his father in the balance as against the best interests of Vietnam, his father would lose.

As revealed in the reference telegram, General Hinh sketched a program of quasi-military government for Vietnam which in effect would lead to military dictatorship. He said he did not like the word as it seemed unduly strong, but admitted the measures he contemplates, such as rule by martial law; a restricted war cabinet composed of Bao Dai, himself, and the Minister of War; and regional councils in which military members would have paramount influence, were equivalent to a military dictatorship.

General Hinh said that he had sent unofficial feelers to members of the French Government through contacts in Paris to inquire if there might be support for such a regime from France. The answer returned was, "Wait until we see the outcome of Dien Bien Phu."

Hinh gave the over-all impression of a man who was completely fed up with the inept bureaucracy, the corrupt oligarchy, and the unpatriotic mass of people, particularly in South Vietnam. He agreed that the Northerners were more robust and said that even Governor Tri had concurred when he proposed that certain villages which sheltered the Vietminh be razed and the populations moved to other areas. At the same time, despite his impetuousity, Hinh freely conceded the necessity of operating with and through Bao Dai. He did not see how his scheme of military rule could succeed without the assent of the Chief of State. He said it was not necessary to place Bao Dai in uniform, as many have suggested, but merely that he should show himself more frequently attired in simple dress and appearing before the people in rice paddy and market place. He said jocularly that through his wife (who he claims has great influence over Bao Dai) he had told the monarch, "You must get out in an ordinary open shirt and take off that necktie with the dancing girls painted on it."

At the same time Hinh runs certain risks. Although he may be confident of the support of his immediate staff and of many enlightened officers in the national army, he has working against him the hostility of the confessional military groups, the apathy of the average conscript, and the enmity of such self-appointed regional Napoleons as Governor Giao of central Vietnam. He has likewise against him the court camarilla, which has counseled the Roman rule of *divide et impera* on Bao Dai, whose chief soothsayer and oracle is Nguyen De. Furthermore, he has against him the organized security forces of the Prefect of Saigon-Cholon, who apparently would rather use the police to protect his protégés than to maintain the public order with impartial severity. Hinh said that when he wished to stage a raid in Saigon or Cholon, the Prefect demanded 24 hours advance notice "with which to prepare the police." Invariably, said Hinh, when his troops arrived, the birds had flown. The General said that henceforth he would take the law into his own hands if he felt it necessary, and that since the national army had no warrant of law to arrest civilians or imprison them, "There will be few imprisonments." He said with reference to the recent petition for peace, signed by a number of relatively well-known fence sitters, (see Joint Weeka 13 of March 26 [*27*])[2] if he had his way he would have created gibbets in the public market place and hung every signatory of that petition from the gallows.

On this high note our conversation ended.

ROBERT MCCLINTOCK

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[2] Not printed. (751G.00(W)/3-2754)

751G.00/4-254 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET NIACT

SAIGON, April 2, 1954—1 p. m.
[Received 2:45 a. m.]

1866. Sent Paris niact 599; repeated information Hanoi 329, Manila 186, Tokyo 65, Singapore 54. Situation at Dien Bien Phu is very grave. Prevented by bad flying weather from dropping reinforcements yesterday, French made desperate effort last night to drop one battalion from C-47s proceeding in trail toward "Huguette". However, at moment drop was about to commence, enemy launched violent attack on northern sector of "Huguette" and most of drop was canceled, only 50 men being landed by parachute. In furious fighting, Viet Minh took position 7 in "Huguette". This is the northwest strong point and consists of a fairly high hill, thus affording enemy close-in observation over the entire position.

Yesterday's drop of ammunition, like that of preceding day, resulted in half supplies falling in enemy hands. With half what did reach DeCastries, French estimate that at current rates of fire, garrison has only sufficient ammunition to last until tomorrow morning.

A new attempt will be made today to drop both ammunition and reinforcements, but weather continues bad. DeCastries has indicated that if he had three battalions of reinforcements, position would be "guaranteed", but that minimum of two battalions was essential if Dien Bien Phu was not to be lost.

Meanwhile other military observers, including General Hinh, feel that Navarre's attention has been so fixed on Dien Bien Phu that there is danger of his neglecting what they regard to be even greater peril in Tonkin Delta. They conjecture that General Giap might indeed be pleased if Navarre should deplete his reserves to succor DeCastries, as this might make possible an effective action in delta, including possibility of capture Hanoi by storm, or internal uprising.

It is reported Navarre has been ordered (presumably by French Government) to cancel third phase of Operation Atlante. In fact, many observers are mystified why good units such as Korea Battalion are being used in this currently empty operation at time when peril is so great, both in delta and Dien Bien Phu.

HEATH

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Meetings with the President"

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State [1]

TOP SECRET

[WASHINGTON,] April 2, 1954.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT

Present: The President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Mr. Dulles showed the President the draft of a possible congressional resolution dealing with the Indochina situation.[2] The President read this over, and said that it reflected what, in his opinion, was desirable. He thought, however, that the tactical procedure should be to develop first the thinking of congressional leaders without actually submitting in the first instance a resolution drafted by ourselves. Mr. Dulles said that that was his intention, but that he had put the matter down at this point in resolution form so as to be sure that we ourselves knew what it was that we thought desirable. The President said he quite agreed with the importance of having our own minds clarified.

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[1] The log of the President's daily appointments indicates that this meeting occurred from 9:30 to 9:45 a. m. and that in addition to the individuals listed below, Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, was present. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments")

[2] *Infra.*

Mr. Dulles said that he thought there might be some difference in approach between Admiral Radford and himself which ought to be clarified before meeting with the congressional leaders. Mr. Dulles said that it was his view that the authority which we sought was designed to be a deterrent, and to give us a strong position with which to develop strength in the area by association not merely with France and the Associated States, but also with Thailand, Indonesia if possible, the UK (Malaya), the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. He mentioned that he was having meetings with the ambassadors of these countries within the next few days, and that he felt it very important from the standpoint of congressional and public opinion that adequate participation in any defensive efforts should be made by these other countries.

Mr. Dulles suggested that perhaps Admiral Radford looked upon this authority as something to be immediately used in some "strike" and irrespective of any prior development of an adequate measure of allied unity.

Admiral Radford said that he had thought of the "strike" primarily in relation to Dien Bien Phu, but he felt that the outcome there would be determined within a matter of hours, and the situation was not one which called for any US participation. Therefore, he had nothing presently in mind, although he did not exclude that military developments in Indochina might take a turn following the fall of Dien Bien Phu, if it did fall, which might call for more active US intervention. He repeated, however, that he had nothing specific now in mind.

Secretary Wilson indicated that he felt that the proposed congressional action was designed to "fill our hand" so that we would be stronger to negotiate with France, the UK and others. I agreed with this interpretation.

Secretary Wilson said that he would be absent on Saturday,[3] but that Roger Kyes and Bob Anderson would be there in his place, along with Admiral Radford.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

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[3] Apr. 3.

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Indochina"

Draft Prepared in the Department of State[1]

[WASHINGTON,] April 2, 1954.

JOINT RESOLUTION

Whereas the Chinese Communist régime and its agents in Indochina are engaging in armed attack against Vietnam and the duly-constituted

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[1] The source text is filed with a draft bearing handwritten corrections and a

Footnote continued on next page.

and friendly government of that country, and are committing aggression against the friendly states of Laos and Cambodia, and threaten other friendly states, with the object of dominating all Southeast Asia, and

Whereas such warlike activities if continued will gravely endanger the peace and security of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, including the security interests of the United States and of Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, with whom the United States has treaties of mutual security and defense, and

Whereas peace and order may be restored and this aggression ended if it is known that the United States is prepared, in pursuance of a decision or recommendation of the United Nations, or by united action with other free nations or in the exercise of the inherent right of individual or collective self defense recognized by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, to restrain and retaliate against such armed attack;

Therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled

That the President of the United States be and he hereby is authorized, in the event he determines that such action is required to protect and defend the safety and security of the United States, to employ the Naval and Air Forces of the United States to assist the forces which are resisting aggression in Southeast Asia, to prevent the extension and expansion of that aggression, and to protect and defend the safety and security of the United States.

This Resolution shall not derogate from the authority of the Congress to declare war and shall terminate on June 30, 1955, or prior thereto if the Congress by concurrent resolution shall so determine.

Footnote continued from preceding page.

typewritten notation reading "Draft taken to WH by JFD 4/2/54." The source text is a clean copy of that draft, reflecting the handwritten modifications. (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Indochina")

751G.00/4–254 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, April 2, 1954—2 p. m.

[Received 10:23 a. m.]

3675. Repeated information Saigon 411. Deptel 3419 (Saigon 1824), April 1.[1] Re Saigon's 563 (Department's 1778)[2] suggesting French

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[1] Telegram 3419 to Paris read as follows: "Would appreciate reply last paragraph Department's 3309 repeated Saigon 1766." (751G.00/4–154) For text of telegram 3309, see footnote 4, p. 1156.

[2] Dated Mar. 24, p. 1155.

Government at highest level be apprised our views concerning importance French Government's acceptance Vietnamese proposals, and further re Embtel 3419 (Saigon 1824) on status Franco-Vietnamese negotiations:

1. There is and has been no evidence French reluctance accept Vietnamese views re concept independence. French grant of full independence and sovereignty Vietnam is not at issue and agreement on this score manifest from beginning conversations.

2. Principal and essentially sole issue since beginning of conversations has been juridical one of drafting a mutually agreeable formula to govern future Franco-Vietnamese relationship. As Embassy has indicated previously to draft a formula that reflects spirit last three paragraphs preamble French Constitution while straddling Articles 62 and 65 as well as fourth paragraph Assembly's March ordre du jour[3] in such way as to meet Vietnamese desires on this score, will be a legal drafting feat of no mean proportions. In absence constitutional revision, to do this, French Government must clearly disregard Articles 62 and 65 of Constitution (which are unacceptable to Vietnamese as drafted), a task made much more difficult by Assembly's action March 9. However, Embassy continues to believe that a mutually satisfactory formula of association will be drafted in due course.

3. French officials concerned do not regard question of whether have separate treaties of independence and association as major problem and believe that agreement can be reached on this issue of "form" in relatively short order after final agreement reached on formula of association.

4. As indicated Embtel 3660,[4] French officials concerned with negotiations anticipate agreement on association formula thus clearing way for possible conclusion basic treaty (or treaties) by [*of*] independence and association by mid-April and in any event before Geneva Conference. However, as Embassy has previously indicated, discussion economic and related matters not expected to begin prior settlement association issue.

5. Embassy shares French view that problem involved is difficult one and one for obvious reasons cannot and should not be concluded in haste without full exploration and satisfaction having been achieved on each side. Embassy would also like to point out again in this context that reason for long delay in beginning negotiations was due delay on Vietnamese side not French side. As consequence, hardly seems appropriate press French unduly this score. Additionally, French fully aware significance these negotiations both in relation internal situa-

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[3] See footnote 2, p. 1103.

[4] In telegram 3660 from Paris, Apr. 1, not printed, the Embassy reported that French officials were convinced that mutually satisfactory agreements with the State of Vietnam could be concluded within two weeks. (651.51G/4-154)

tion Vietnam and forthcoming Indochina conference Geneva. Finally, Embassy feels that it would be inappropriate, in absence of evidence of a break-down in negotiations, for United States to make move that could be construed as exercising pressure on French Government to accept fully whatever Vietnamese propose thus providing critics with what they would term one more example United States interference in regard matter the future implications of which may well extend beyond Indochina peninsula. While recognizing importance full satisfaction Vietnamese desires this regard, Embassy feels we must also endeavor do nothing further undermine French interest in continuation military effort Indochina. Hence Embassy wishes underscore its conclusion in Embtel 3660 to effect no expression be made French this regard at present.[5]

DILLON

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[5] In telegram 3799 from Paris, Apr. 8, Ambassador Dillon reported that Nguyen Dac Khe of the Vietnamese Delegation in Paris had requested that the United States intercede with France, with a view to promoting the signing of French-Vietnamese agreements prior to the opening of the Geneva Conference on Apr. 26. Dillon informed the Department that he continued to recommend that no representations by the United States be entered with French authorities. (651.51G/4–854)

751G.00/4–254

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright)[1]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] April 2, 1954.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador
The Secretary of State
Mr. R. H. Scott, British Minister
The Under Secretary of State
C—Mr. MacArthur, Counselor
EUR—Mr. Merchant, Assistant Secretary
FE—Everett F. Drumright

Sir Roger Makins, accompanied by Mr. Scott, called at the Secretary's request. The Secretary said that he wished to discuss the Indochina situation. The situation in Indochina had reached a serious stage. There was a threat of a French collapse or of a French desire to reach a settlement on terms which would result in the loss of Indochina and the rest of Southeast Asia to the Communists. There was a need, therefore, to encourage the French and to keep them from reaching a settlement at Geneva or elsewhere which would be disastrous to the French and the free world. His speech of March 29, the Secretary said, was designed to meet this situation. It had been carefully considered and had received the approval of the President. The Secretary then called particular attention to that portion of the speech which said that the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Soviet Russia and Communist China would be a grave threat to the whole free community and which said that that possibility should be met by united action. The Secretary indicated that this passage was directed not only to the French but to the Chinese Communists on whom he hoped it would have a deterrent effect.

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[1] The log of the Secretary's daily appointments indicates that this conversation occurred at 3 p.m. (Princeton University, Dulles papers, "Daily Appointments") A brief summary of this conversation was transmitted to London in telegram 5177 of Apr. 4, repeated for information to Paris as telegram 3478. For text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, p. 295.

The Secretary said that the situation in Indochina had been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff who had expressed doubt whether the two-year Navarre Plan could be accomplished, even with our very substantial military and financial assistance. Even now the situation in Dien Bien Phu was critical and the possibility existed that the French defenders would be overwhelmed, bringing in its train possibly serious repercussions in France, including a public demand to withdraw from the war. Even if Dien Bien Phu could be held and the French were able to maintain the present military situation until the monsoon rains came, when there would be an abatement of military operations, the possibility existed that the French would go to Geneva to seek a settlement either through the Conference or directly, which would lead to the loss of Southeast Asia. The U.S. Government had of late been giving serious consideration to this matter and had come to the conclusion that we could not stand by passively and let Southeast Asia go by default to the Communists.

The Secretary then said that Britain, with her interests in Malaya and her ties with Australia and New Zealand, had a big stake in Southeast Asia. The French, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Thai, the Filipinos, the Associated States, the Burmese and others, also had important interests at stake. The Secretary said he believed that the interested states should consider together what they should do to checkmate Communist efforts to take over Southeast Asia. If this were not done now, the situation would be much worse in three or four years and might lead to a world conflict. The Secretary had therefore thought it desirable to call in the British Ambassador, discuss our thinking with him and ask him to report to his Government. The Secretary said that in particular he believed that the U.S. and the U.K. should attempt to arrive at a common position which would be designed to encourage the French not to engage in a sell-out of Indochina, and also consider some broader collective security arrangement which could be utilized to keep Southeast Asia out of the hands of the Communists irrespective of what position the French might finally adopt. The Secretary would welcome Her Majesty's Government's views.

The British Ambassador said that his Government recognized the serious state into which the situation in Indochina had deteriorated and apparently even regarded it in more pessimistic terms than the U.S. Government. Sir Roger then said that the British position thus far had not gone beyond seeking some formula which would stop the war and yet keep Indochina out of Communist hands. He said that the British Government had considered such solutions as a cease-fire, coalition, free elections and even partition. The British Government recognized that none of these solutions is satisfactory. Indeed, in the present state of affairs in Indochina, all are disadvantageous and might prove disastrous. Of the four solutions mentioned, Sir Roger believed that partition was the least undesirable. It would at least afford a breathing spell and perhaps a chance to consolidate in a part of Indochina and the remainder of Southeast Asia. Sir Roger indicated that the British Government, although it recognized the dangers inherent in a French withdrawal, had given no consideration to active military participation either in company with the French or in some broader grouping. Sir Roger said that he shared the Secretary's view that the Indochina problem merited further consideration and that he would be glad to put the Secretary's views to his Government.

Sir Roger inquired just what the Secretary had in mind in regard to united action. The Secretary replied that this question, along with other aspects of the Indochina situation, was under active study at this time and that he could not discuss it in detail. But what he had in mind, however, apart from a strong united front at Geneva, was some kind of a collective organization of free world countries which shared common interests in Southeast Asia. These would include the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, (these last three with which we have security pacts), the Associated States, and Thailand. The general idea would be for these states to band together in some kind of common defense of Southeast Asia. In reply to a further inquiry from the British Ambassador, the Secretary said that the question of United Nations intervention had been considered in a preliminary way and, although he did not want to rule it out entirely, there were a good many difficulties in this course of action. These included not only the veto in the Security Council but the question of whether a two-thirds majority could be obtained in the General Assembly. In reply to a further query, the Secretary said that there was no intention of bringing the ROK or the Chinese National Government into any Southeast Asia collective political grouping, short of a general conflict in the area.

In the course of the conversation, the Secretary discussed the concept of the deterrent action directed toward Communist China. If the Chinese Communists could be made to see that stepped-up activities on their part in Southeast Asia could lead to disastrous retaliation on our part by sea and air, perhaps they could be persuaded to refrain from adventures in that area. If so, Southeast Asia could be saved from communism and probably a world wide conflict avoided. In any case, the Secretary said, we felt the risk is justified. The alternative of sitting passively by and letting the Communists overrun Southeast Asia was, in the Secretary's view, likely to lead to greater risks and disaster in the long run. Furthermore, the Secretary explained, the atomic balance, which is now advantageous to us, might decline over the next four years. The British Ambassador indicated that this point of view had merit and said that he would convey it to his Government. At this point, the British Ambassador suggested that it would be useful if the British military liaison officers in Washington could exchange views with our JCS in this regard. The Under Secretary said, after some discussion, that arrangements would be made with Admiral Radford for a meeting some time in the latter part of next week.

In response to a further inquiry from the British Ambassador, the Secretary said he hoped that some action on the subjects under discussion could be taken prior to the Geneva Conference. He had already seen the Australian and New Zealand Ambassadors and he would be seeing the French Ambassador on April 3 and would be discussing the subject in general terms with him, but not in as full detail as the foregoing. The British Ambassador said that he would report the substance of the conversation to his Government and hoped to be able to transmit the views of his Government at some later date.

751G.00/3–3154 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in India [1]

CONFIDENTIAL WASHINGTON, April 2, 1954—3:54 p. m.

1139. Embtel 1487.[2] On March 30 I explained to Indian Ambassador grave concern with which we view possibility extension of communist control through Southeast Asia.[3]

He asked me what I meant in Overseas Press Club speech by reference "united action". I informed him I did not wish specify what I had in mind, but that military action was always the last resort. United action might involve a UN consideration of the question or possibly countries in the area might exchange views. I said I hoped military activity would not spread but that this possibility was not excluded; my feeling was this would not occur. I said I did not consider a peaceful settlement could be acceptable if it meant a giveaway of Indochina to the communists. We cannot be content with mere promises and we would not make any down payments until time and communist action had provided evidence of good intentions.

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[1] Drafted by William L. S. Williams and Nicholas G. Thacher of the Office of South Asian Affairs.

[2] Dated Mar. 31, p. 1193.

[3] A memorandum of the conversation of Mar. 30 between Secretary Dulles and Ambassador G. L. Mehta, drafted by Williams of SOA, is in Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation, lot 64 D 199.

In response to question about possibility of French declaration of intention I pointed out French had issued declaration last July.

FYI Believe it important for tactical reasons that at present we should not make plain our intentions in suggesting united action, and in any case nature of such action still under consideration.

DULLES

751G.00/4–254 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 2, 1954—8 p. m.

[Received 4:11 p. m.]

3692. Repeated information Saigon 413. Eyes only Ambassador. Limit distribution. Pleven told General Norstad and myself this afternoon that he wanted to give us his personal views on the situation in Indochina. He said that he had informed Laniel of our visit and Laniel knew that he was giving us his views.

Pleven said that he was very concerned about the situation. The Viet Minh efforts re Dien Bien Phu did not seem to affect the ability of Viet Minh elsewhere in Indochina. Their forces were very active and aggressive everywhere. The situation in Dien Bien Phu itself was difficult, and if it should be lost the French would lose with it some of their very best troops, namely French paratroop battalions. He said that last night it had been possible to re-supply the garrison with ammunition but reinforcement of personnel by parachute had not been possible.

Pleven was particularly concerned by the situation in the Vietnam Army during the last six weeks. He felt there had been no progress during that period whatsoever. If Dien Bien Phu should be lost, it would mean a terrible blow to the morale of the troops in Indochina and, particularly, to the local population and the Vietnamese forces, with a corresponding boost in morale of the Viet Minh. As a result of this, drastic action was necessary. In the first place, it would be necessary to provide replacements for the paratroop battalions' losses in Dien Bien Phu. They were suffering heavy casualties, and were the only effective reserve available to General Navarre. In the second place, substantial air reinforcements were necessary, as at present all aviation was tied up in the Dien Bien Phu operation. This meant that nothing was available to attack Viet Minh operations elsewhere in Indochina. The situation was very definitely being taken advantage of by Viet Minh to move more freely and openly.

To take care of this situation, Pleven plans this afternoon to make the following proposal to the French Cabinet:

1. Two additional battalions of French paratroops now in North Africa should be sent immediately to Indochina. It would be necessary for this movement to be carried out in great secrecy so that Vietnamese did not know of it and relax their efforts, and so that opposition could not be stirred up in metropolitan France, and so that the Viet Minh would not be informed and redouble their efforts prior to the arrival of these troops.

In order to move them with the greatest speed, Pleven will propose that French ask the US to airlift the two battalions and their personal equipment to Indochina. General Norstad told Pleven that if the French Government makes this decision, preliminary planning will be started here at once without prejudice to the eventual decision, which must, of course, be taken in Washington. Pleven pointed out that these two battalions were vitally needed in North Africa in case of any possible trouble there but that, nevertheless, he felt the need was so urgent that he was going to recommend their movement even though this would entail risk in North Africa.

In answer to the need for aviation reinforcements, Pleven said there were some 80 or 90 French naval aviation pilots who were available to fly planes of the type presently being used on the French carriers in Indochina. He said it would be most helpful if the US could provide a large carrier (US-manned) and aircraft of types familiar to French pilots as an operating base. The French would provide the pilots and air crews necessary to carry on operations.

Pleven said that for the moment these were his personal ideas but that they were being submitted to a ministerial meeting this afternoon and he was giving them to us so that we could commence thinking about them in anticipation of any possible request by the French Government.[1]

DILLON

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[1] In telegram 3693, transmitted from Paris at 8 p. m., Apr. 2, Ambassador Dillon provided the following additional information: "Bidault sent for me at 7 o'clock tonight to tell me that French Government was officially requesting US airlift to Indochina for two paratroop battalions, as described in Embtel 3692.

"Norstad commencing preparations for airlift immediately as training exercise prior to final decision in Washington. Bidault repeatedly emphasized need for utmost secrecy and utmost speed." (751G.00/4–254)

Telegram 3470 to Paris, Apr. 3, repeated to Saigon for information as telegram 1850, read as follows: "Defense has approved airlift proposal and Norstad has received authorization to implement. Bonnet informed." (751G.00/4–254)

Radford papers, Indochina papers/Geneva Conference

Memorandum by Chief of Staff, United States Army (Ridgway)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 2, 1954—4 p. m.

Memorandum For: Admiral Radford
General Twining
Admiral Carney
General Shepherd

1. *a.* On 31 March 1954, the Chairman JCS in a meeting attended only by the four service Chiefs, and apparently on his own authority, asked their individual views as to the necessity or desirability of recommending to the Secretary of Defense, and/or the President, that an immediate offer of assistance by U.S. Naval Air and/or Air Force units be made to the French, to assist in the defense of Dien Bien Phu.[1]

b. My answer was an emphatic and immediate "No". My reasons, as then stated, were:

(1) *On the general issue:*
Unless the question emanated from proper authority, any such recommended action—for or against—was clearly outside the proper scope of authority of the JCS. This body was not charged with formulating foreign policy, nor of advocating it, unless its advice was specifically sought by the President, or the Secretary of Defense. To do otherwise would be to involve the JCS inevitably in politics.

(2) *On the specific issue:*
From the military viewpoint, the United States capability for effective intervention in the Dien Bien Phu operation was altogether disproportionate to the liability it would incur.

From the military viewpoint, the outcome of the Dien Bien Phu operation, which ever way it might go, would not in itself decisively affect the military situation there.

If recommended and executed, intervention by United States armed forces would greatly increase the risk of general war. If the United States, by its own act, were deliberately to risk provoking such possible reaction, it must first materially increase its readiness to accept the consequences.

2. The Chairman, JCS at about 011800 Apr, orally posed a question which I understood to be as follows:

"If proper authority asked the JCS for a statement of their recommended action in response to a request upon the United States Government from the Government of France for assistance in Indo-China in the form of the intervention of United States armed forces to relieve the Dien Bien Phu garrison, what would the JCS statement be?"

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[1] See memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, Mar. 31, p. 1198.

3. My position within the JCS, with reference to the action I think should be recommended in answering the question in para. 2 above, is likewise an emphatic "No", and for substantially the same reasons as stated in para. 1.

4. *a.* In the JCS Executive Session this morning, the Chairman submitted in writing the question which follows, stating that this question emanated from the Secretary of Defense, who desired a JCS answer:

> "If the United States Government is requested by the Government of France to render assistance in Indo-China by committing USAF units and/or naval air forces in combat, what position do the JCS take?"

b. Within the JCS, the action I recommend in response to this question is to deny the request at this time, and for the same reasons as those stated above.

5. In my opinion, the JCS should limit themselves to stating U.S. military capabilities for rendering assistance in Indo-China by employing any part of U.S. armed forces, and further, should estimate and submit with this statement of capabilities, a statement of the military consequences as the JCS view them, in the event the rendering of assistance of United States armed forces should be directed by proper authority.

M. B. Ridgway
General, United States Army

Radford papers, Indochina papers/Geneva Conference

Memorandum by the Chief of Naval Operations (Carney)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 2 April 1954.

Memorandum For: Admiral Radford
General Twining
General Ridgway
General Shepherd

Subject: U.S. Intervention in Indochina

1. At a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff this date the following question was posed to them by the Chairman:

> "If the United States government is requested by the French government to render assistance in Indochina by committing U.S. Air Force units and/or U.S. Naval Air Forces in combat, what position do the Joint Chiefs of Staff take?"

2. I recommend that the Joint Chiefs of Staff take the following position:

a. The Joint Chiefs of Staff should state the current capabilities of rendering assistance by the commitment of air forces, both Navy and Air Force, in terms of units and the earliest time they can be committed.

b. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the foregoing contribution would improve the French tactical situation, with particular reference to the current battle for Dien Bien Phu, but are not prepared to state that such contribution would be decisive.

c. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the potential tactical advantage indicated above must be weighed against the potential consequence of this U.S. involvement in the Indochina war.

d. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirm their opinion as to the strategic importance of Indochina and, from the military standpoint, consider that the loss of Indochina to the Communists should be averted if possible.

ROBT. B. CARNEY

Radford papers, Indochina papers/Geneva Conference

Memorandum by the Chief of Staff, United States Air Force (Twining) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford)[1]

TOP SECRET U.S. EYES ONLY WASHINGTON, April 2, 1954.

Subject: Indo China Situation

1. The problem has been posed:

If the U.S. Government is requested by the French Government to assist them in Indo China by committing U.S. naval air and U.S. air forces, what is the JCS position?

2. My answer is a qualified "Yes" provided certain assurances are given by the French Government clearly and at a high level. France should agree to:

a. Accept U.S. command of air and naval elements under a French theatre commander.

b. Accept and employ U.S. leadership in the training of troops and employment of combat forces.

c. Train and organize indigenous forces under indigenous leadership.

d. Grant to the Associated States true sovereignty and publicize this action.

N. F. TWINING

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[1] Copies of this memorandum were transmitted to General Ridgway, Admiral Carney, and General Shepherd.

Radford papers, Indochina papers/Geneva Conference

Memorandum by the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps (Shepherd)

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 2 April 1954.

Memorandum For: Admiral Radford
General Twining
General Ridgway
Admiral Carney

1. Upon consideration I have reached the conclusion that air intervention in the current fighting in Indo China would be an unprofitable adventure. If I could convince myself that such intervention—on any scale now available to us—would turn the tide of military victory in favor of the French I would hold an entirely different opinion despite the hazards and uncertainties attending such a course. But I feel that we can expect no significant military results from an improvised air offensive against the guerilla forces. They simply do not offer us a target which our air will find remunerative—they are nowhere exposed at a vital point critical to their continued resupply and communications. The initial morale effect of our appearance would therefore soon give way to a feeling of disappointment as it became evident that our efforts were without important effect on the fortunes of the soldier on the ground.

2. The essentials of the problem appear to be these:

a. Can we, by overt military action in the air, contribute significantly to a French victory in Indo China?

b. Would such direct intervention on our part at this time serve as a deterrent to Communism elsewhere?

I believe that a negative answer is indicated in both cases.

3. It follows that action by our air forces in Indo China, if initiated today, would be taken in the face of impending disaster and holds no significant promise of success. For us to participate in a defeat cannot be accounted as a means either of combatting Communism effectively, or of enhancing our position in the eyes of the Asiatics.

4. The inevitable result would be the necessity of either admitting a fresh military failure on our part or intervening further with ground forces in an effort to recoup our fortunes. We can ill afford the first. I do not believe the other is a matter which we should even consider under present circumstances.

5. It is with regret that I record conclusions which run so counter to my natural instincts to support our friends in their efforts to halt the Communist advance.

LEMUEL C. SHEPHERD, JR.
General, U.S. Marine Corps

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Indochina"

Memorandum for the File of the Secretary of State [1]

SECRET PERSONAL AND PRIVATE [WASHINGTON,] April 5, 1954.

Subject: Conference with Congressional Leaders concerning the crisis in Southeast Asia, Saturday, April 3, 1954.[2]

Those in attendance were:

Senators Knowland, Millikin, Johnson of Texas, Russell, Clements, Speaker Martin, Congressmen McCormack, Priest [3]

From the Department of Defense: Admiral Radford, Kyes, Anderson;

From the Department of State: The Secretary, the Under Secretary (part of the time), and Thruston B. Morton.

Admiral Radford gave a very comprehensive briefing of the military situation in Indochina. He went into particular detail in connection with the battle now raging at Dien Bien Phu.

The Secretary explained the significance of Indochina, pointing out that it was the key to Southeast Asia, that if the Communists gained Indochina and nothing was done about it, it was only a question of time until all of Southeast Asia falls along with Indonesia, thus imperiling our western island of defense.

The Secretary then said that he felt that the President should have Congressional backing so that he could use air and seapower in the area if he felt it necessary in the interest of national security. Senator Knowland expressed concurrence but further discussion developed a unanimous reaction of the Members of Congress that there should be no Congressional action until the Secretary had obtained commitments of a political and material nature from our allies. The feeling was unanimous that "we want no more Koreas with the United States furnishing 90% of the manpower."

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[1] A handwritten notation on the source text by Roderic O'Connor, Special Assistant to Secretary Dulles, indicates that this memorandum was a revision by the Secretary of a draft prepared by Assistant Secretary Morton.

[2] An entry in the log of the Secretary's daily appointments, headed "Congressional Mtg—re Resolution for Indochina," indicates that this meeting took place at 9:30 a. m. (Princeton University, Dulles papers, "Daily Appointments") At a press and radio news conference at the State Department at 12:15 p. m., Henry Suydam, Chief of the News Division, refused to expand upon the following one-sentence announcement of the meeting: "At a meeting in the State Department with the Secretary of State present, Admiral Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed a bi-partisan group of congressional leaders on the situation in Indochina." (ON files, lot 60 D 641, "Daily News Conferences")

[3] Senators William F. Knowland of California (the Senate Majority Leader), Eugene D. Millikin of Colorado, Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas (the Senate Minority Leader), Richard B. Russell of Georgia, and Earle C. Clements of Kentucky; Representatives Joseph W. Martin, Jr., of Massachusetts (Speaker of the House), John W. McCormack of Massachusetts (Minority Whip), and J. Percy Priest of Tennessee.

Both the Secretary and Admiral Radford pointed out that the Administration did not now contemplate the commitment of land forces. The Congressmen replied that once the flag was committed the use of land forces would inevitably follow.

The Secretary said that he had already initiated talks to secure unity of action. He had spoken with the British Ambassador yesterday and was meeting with Bonnet in a few minutes. He had talked with Romulo[4] but he could not go further without knowing that he could expect U.S. action if the others responded.

Admiral Radford was asked if airpower could save Dien Bien Phu today. He replied that it was too late but that if we had committed airpower three weeks ago, he felt reasonably certain that the Red forces would have been defeated. It was apparent that the Congressional group, especially Senator Russell, had very little confidence in the French. There was less criticism of the British, but it was nevertheless substantial. Senator Russell said that if the U.K. flinched in this matter, it would be necessary to reconsider our whole system of collective security from the standpoint of dependability. Admiral Radford pointed out the extensive British military deployment in Malaya and elsewhere throughout that area.

It was decided that the Secretary would attempt to get definite commitments from the English and other free nations. If satisfactory commitments could be obtained, the consensus was that a Congressional resolution could be passed, giving the President power to commit armed forces in the area.

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[4] Gen. Carlos P. Romulo of the Philippines, personal representative of President Magsaysay on visit in the United States.

751G.00/4-354

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Bonbright)[1]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] April 3, 1954.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: Ambassador Bonnet
The Secretary
Mr. MacArthur
Mr. Bonbright

The Ambassador came in at 12:30 this morning [*afternoon*] at the Secretary's request. The conversation lasted an hour.

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[1] The main points made by the Secretary of State during this conversation were summarized in telegram 3476 to Paris, Apr. 3, also sent to London as telegram 5175. For text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 293–294.

After conveying to the Ambassador his condolences in connection with the recent death of M. Bonnet's mother, the Secretary began by asking M. Bonnet whether he had seen his speech of March 29. The Ambassador replied that he had read it carefully and had been struck by two things: (1) the determination of the United States not to permit Southeast Asia to fall into Communist hands, and (2) the determination of the United States not to recognize the Chinese Communist regime and not to vote for the admission of that regime into the United Nations. The Ambassador observed that the Secretary had been silent on the subject of trade with China and wondered whether concessions in this field might be contemplated. The Secretary replied that he had deliberately omitted the question of trade from his speech since he had wished to cover only the military and political aspects of the problem. Our present position was that the embargo should be maintained.

The Secretary then stated that he would like to obtain the views of the French Government regarding a possible internationalization of the Indochinese conflict or the broadening of the base of support for carrying out the fight. He observed that up to now the French Government had been opposed to any action in the United Nations. M. Bonnet said that the French Government was placing its hopes on a solution of the problem at Geneva. His Government did not have clearly in mind what kind of solution could be obtained, but they were anxious for the tripartite preparations for the conference to begin promptly. The Secretary informed him that he had just decided to agree to the tripartite discussions to begin on April 12. The Ambassador expressed gratification and hoped that we would be prepared to discuss substance as well as procedure. The Secretary was noncommittal on this point. He pointed out that very important problems were involved and that he was not sure that our representatives at the tripartite talks would be able to go very far without additional instructions from Washington.

The Secretary then went on to say that he could see no possible negotiated solution of the problem which did not boil down to: (1) a face-saving formula to disguise the surrender of the French Union forces and the subsequent loss of the area to Communists; or (2) a face-saving formula to cover the retreat of the Viet Minh. We had carefully considered various ways out of the impasse and they led to no satisfactory end. We could not, as in the case of Korea, draw a line of demarcation between the opposing parties since the situation did not lend itself to that kind of compromise in view of the fact that the Viet Minh were everywhere. A mixed, or coalition, government would only be the beginning of disaster. On the other hand, if we were strong and resolute enough to make the Chinese Communists see that their present line of action could lead to a possible extension of the conflict, a solution might be found under the second alternative to which he had referred, for if the Chinese were convinced that the extension of their power in Southeast Asia would not be permitted without the danger of war, they might quit. To accomplish this what was required was a strong coalition of states which had vital interests in the area, which recognized the threat to the area, and were ready to fight if necessary. The states we had in mind, in addition to the United States, were France, the Associated States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines. If such a group were prepared to fight to protect their interests in the area there might be a successful negotiation at Geneva. If, on the other hand, a negotiated settlement were reached on the basis of the first alternative this would not only lead to the greatest difficulties for Malaya, Indochina, and the offshore island defenses of the free world, but would have serious repercussions in Europe and North Africa. By and large he considered that the future of France as a great power was at stake.

Ambassador Bonnet interposed at this point to inquire whether the United States Congress would be prepared to sanction American military involvement in Indochina. The Secretary replied that in his opinion the answer was "yes", provided the action were as part of a coalition such as he had referred to and provided, of course, there was a continuation of the French military effort. There would be strong feeling here against our "going it alone" in order to save the British Commonwealth.

The Ambassador then inquired whether the Secretary envisaged that the negotiations for the setting up of the coalition would run parallel to the Geneva Conference, to which the Secretary replied that the coalition should be formed first in order to permit us to go to Geneva with the required strength. With reference to the continuation of the French military effort, M. Bonnet said that he had been impressed in his recent visit to France by the growing strength of public opinion in favor of a truce and a settlement. He feared that many Frenchmen would look upon the coalition described by the Secretary as a cover for France to continue bearing 90 per cent of the manpower burden as we had done in Korea. This the French could not do. The Secretary indicated that we recognized this and it was for this purpose that we were suggesting a coalition which would add strength to the effort now being borne by the French Union forces. In his view more of the ground forces burden should be shifted to the Associated States as rapidly as possible. He went on to say that we, too, desired a settlement but asked if we could get it by being strong or by being weak.

The Ambassador then inquired whether the Secretary was optimistic about getting the British, the Australians and the New Zealanders to go along with us. The Secretary indicated that he thought there might be great difficulties, particularly with the British. The latter are presently very much torn and subject to different pressures. On the one hand they have their interests in the Far East, including Malaya and Hong Kong; on the other hand, their general policy is to try to gain time in Asia. The political situation in Britain is not easy and the Government is faced with a difficult debate tomorrow on the hydrogen bomb. However, there is no use in assuming failure and one cannot tell unless one tries. Australia and New Zealand will probably be willing to urge the British in the right direction.

In response to M. Bonnet's question as to how the approach to the other Governments should be made, the Secretary stated that we would be guided by the desires of the French Government. Possibly they and we could make the approach together. In this connection, he said that he had seen a number of the representatives of the countries involved who had come to see him in recent days following his speech. These representatives would have a general idea of what he had in his mind but nothing yet had been done of a formal nature. The heart of the matter was the attitude of the French Government. If they proved unwilling there was no use in proceeding. We would have to let Indochina go and see what sort of an arrangement we could reach with the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand with a view to seeing what could be done to prevent the Communist power from extending beyond Indochina.

M. Bonnet inquired whether if no satisfactory solution was reached at Geneva and the fighting continued in Indochina the other nations would take action against the Viet Minh. The Secretary indicated that it might be against Communist China. M. Bonnet asked whether United States air support would be made available, to which the Secretary replied in the affirmative.

The Ambassador referred again to the section in the Secretary's speech where he stated that united action was required and asked whether we preferred the coalition idea to action in the United Nations. The Secretary answered that he did not exclude action in the United Nations and, in any event, it would be necessary to bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations in some formal way. However, he doubted if there was a good basis for effective action in the UN where we would be faced with the Soviet veto in the Security Council and by long drawn out speeches in the Assembly. We should lay the matter before the United Nations but not count on that organization. Our actions could be justified under Article 51 of the Charter. Other members of the *ad hoc* coalition had vital interests in the area which could be shown to be in danger. For its part, the United States has obligations under the Mutual Defense Treaties which it has concluded with Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines.

The Ambassador returned to the question of the attitude of the United States Congress and asked again whether if the British declined to enter the coalition the United States Government and Congress were prepared to "go it alone." The Secretary stated that he was certain that if the coalition were established the United States would play its full part. The difficulties would be greatly increased—although he would not say it was impossible—if the British would not agree. In the latter contingency, we might wait until the threat to Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines was closer.

Returning to the problem of Geneva, the Secretary stated that we must have an alternative. In his view we obtained an armistice in Korea primarily because the Chinese feared that we would knock out their industrial area north of the Yalu. A coalition along the lines he described would offer us an alternative at Geneva without which we would be lost. M. Bonnet observed, speaking personally, that the alternative for the Chinese and Soviets at Geneva was to be found in the Secretary's speech and his warning that we would not allow the area to fall under their control. He believed as a result of the Secretary's March 29 speech that in Paris and probably elsewhere there was a strong impression that the United States would actively intervene, by itself if necessary, to prevent Indochina from falling into Communist hands. This, he thought, would be a more important factor to the Communists than the coalition, although he recognized that the coalition would obviously be of assistance to the United States in connection with its domestic problem. The Secretary emphasized again that in an area where our Allies have important stakes the United States should not be left alone. If our Allies held back there would be grave repercussions here on our relations with our Allies around the world.

The Secretary concluded this part of the conversation by informing the Ambassador that we had just agreed to comply with the request for assistance which we received from the French Government last night (to airlift two parachute battalions from North Africa to Indochina). He stressed that in every case where the French had come to us urgently for assistance we had complied with their request, often in a matter of hours. The Ambassador stated that this fact was fully known and appreciated in France.

Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations"

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State [1]

[WASHINGTON,] April 3, 1954—1:44 p.m.

The Sec. said they had the meeting with the Congressional leaders,[2] and on the whole it went pretty well—although it raised some serious problems. The Sec. said the feeling was that Congress would be quite prepared to go along on some vigorous action if we were not doing it alone.[3] They want to be sure the people in the area are involved too. Both did not blame the Congressmen for this thought. They agreed that the stakes concern others more than us. The President said you can't go in and win unless the people want you. The French could win in 6 months if the people were with them. The Sec. said the position of Britain is what they were thinking of. It is hard to get the American people excited if they are not. The Sec. suggested the President write the PM. The President suggested working up a cable on a personal basis to be sure he sees it.* The President suggested if ANZUS, as a base, would ask us to consult—then he interrupted this thought and said the Australians must be terribly excited. The Sec. said the Australian and New Zealand Ambassadors were coming in Monday. The President said why not suggest to them consultation with Britain, Thailand and the Philippines.

The Sec. said Bonnet was in and is cabling his government. If they pull out, it will change the scenery, but the Sec. said he does not think they will.

The President asked who was at the meeting, and the Sec. told him.

The President asked if there was any other move to date [*today?*]? The Sec. said no, and the President said he could come down if needed. The Sec. said no, it was not necessary.

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[1] Drafted by Phyllis D. Bernau of the office of the Secretary of State. President Eisenhower was speaking from Camp David, Md., where he spent the period from Friday afternoon, Apr. 2, to Sunday evening, Apr. 4.

[2] For the memorandum of that meeting by Secretary Dulles, see p. 1224.

[3] According to the memorandum of a telephone conversation between Secretary Dulles and Senator Knowland on the afternoon of Apr. 3, the Senator said that he thought the meeting had been helpful. The Secretary said that it had provided him with what he needed to go ahead. (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations")

*The Sec. said we would do something. [Footnote in the source text. A handwritten notation at this point read "MacArthur and Bonbright working on this." For the message sent to Prime Minister Churchill, see telegram 5179 to London, Apr. 4, p. 1238.]

751G.00/4-454

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Bonbright)[1]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] April 4, 1954.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: The Australian Ambassador, Sir Percy Spender
The New Zealand Ambassador, Mr. Munro
The Secretary of State
The Under Secretary of State
Admiral Radford
Mr. MacArthur
Mr. Bonbright

The meeting took place this afternoon at 4:00 at the Secretary's house. The Secretary began by outlining the situation in much the same terms as he had used with Ambassador Makins and Ambassador Bonnet. He referred to our intensive studies in preparation for the Geneva Conference, to the deteriorating French position and the very real possibility that if nothing is done the French will be inclined to accept a settlement at Geneva which will amount to a sell-out. He said that we had explored various alternatives and had come to the conclusion that there was no negotiated settlement possible which did not boil down to either a disguised surrender of the French or a disguised surrender of the Communists. The situation was fraught with danger for the whole Southeast Asia area. He had talked recently to our Ambassador in Thailand, Mr. Donovan, and concluded that Thailand would not hold out. This in turn would step up the danger to Malaya. He had spoken of Malaya to Mr. Eden in Berlin who had said the present situation there was even under existing circumstances far from reassuring. The situation in Indonesia was in precarious balance. He was afraid all this would increase the direct threat to Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the entire off-shore chain of islands. The situation in Japan would be serious, and with the loss of Southeast Asia Japan would be tempted to accept an accommodation with the Communists whereby in exchange for raw materials they would find a market for their industry. The Secretary stressed that all of this would come about unless a new force was brought to bear on the problem.

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[1] This meeting was summarized in telegram 163 to Canberra, Apr. 6, also sent to Wellington as telegram 133; for text, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 367–369.

The Secretary then referred to the military situation in Indochina where the Communists were making a determined effort to obtain a victory before Geneva and before the end of the usual fighting season. Admiral Radford expressed the view that the fight could, however, continue through the summer and that the conditions under which we had fought in New Guinea were worse than those in Indochina. General Smith also observed that there is no terrain and no climate in which fighting cannot go on.

The Secretary then stated that in our view the required new element in the situation should be the creation before Geneva of an *ad hoc* coalition of states directly interested in the area who would pledge themselves to work together and, if necessary, to contribute forces. He told the Ambassadors in strict confidence that we had already sounded out Congressional opinion and the Secretary could say that we were prepared to contribute and play our full part in a common effort. The Secretary indicated that next to France the interest of the United Kingdom was probably the most direct in view of Malaya, Hong Kong and ties of the Commonwealth, and that unless the United Kingdom were willing to come along with us it probably would not be possible. Speaking frankly, we could not fight alone to preserve the British position in Malaya. However, with the cooperation of the British and others the Secretary believed that the Congress would pass resolutions granting extra powers to the President. If we could carry out the program as we envisaged it we believed this would win the struggle. He thought that the Soviets in these circumstances would try to call off the Chinese and write off Ho. He had the impression from his conversations with Molotov in Berlin that the Soviets do not wish the Chinese to get involved in an extension of the war.

The Secretary stated that he had discussed our proposal with Ambassador Makins last Friday and, in somewhat different terms, with the French Ambassador on Saturday.[2] His talk with Sir Roger indicated that our proposal was in advance of anything the British were thinking about; indeed, their thoughts seemed to be directed toward the idea of a compromise at Geneva and toward finding the "least bad" alternative, which in their view seemed to be the division of Indochina, perhaps along the line of the 16th parallel.

The Secretary continued to stress at length how the attitude of the United Kingdom was the key to the problem. He admitted that the British had difficult political problems at home and wished to avoid a clash with China for various reasons including questions of trade, the vulnerability of Hong Kong, the effects on India, etc. The Secretary then referred to the situation in 1932 when the British had turned down the appeal of Mr. Stimson for joint action to halt the Japanese in Manchuria. At that time the British had refused on the ostensible grounds that they lacked the support of the United States in Europe, a condition which could not be said to prevail today.

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[2] For the memorandum of the Dulles–Makins conversation of Friday, Apr. 2, see p. 1214. For the memorandum of the Dulles–Bonnet conversation of Saturday, Apr. 3, see p. 1225.

The Secretary then asked Admiral Radford to comment on the military aspects of the situation. The Admiral indicated that the problem had been carefully studied in a series of meetings beginning with the first Singapore conference and that there had been complete agreement on the military side of the importance of holding Northern Indochina (Tonkin). These studies had led to the conclusion that it would not be possible to hold anywhere else in Indochina and the loss of the area would lead to political reactions elsewhere, although these might be somewhat delayed. The military could do little in such a situation. He pointed out that the British, with their naval and military forces in Malaya, Hong Kong and Korea, were as heavily committed as the French.

Speaking of the French military effort, Admiral Radford expressed the opinion that their leadership was poor and that their planning and conduct of operations were hampered by political factors in Paris and the lack of political support in Indochina itself. For example, the French had felt compelled to send troops to Luang Prabang although, militarily speaking, this was unsound. He felt that a defeat at Dien Bien Phu should not affect the military capability of the French to hold on but that the psychological effect in Vietnam would be very bad. He also believed that the French use of air power had been ineffective. He said that the danger was not limited to Dien Bien Phu since the French now feared action in the Delta and elsewhere. In the absence of reenforcements they might suffer a sizeable defeat in the not too distant future. This could lead to desertion of the natives and the situation was serious.

The Secretary then returned to his thesis that the French willingness and ability to hold out depends at least in part on whether they see any relief in sight. He understood from Ambassador Bonnet that his speech of March 29, which had been interpreted in France as a forecast that the U.S. would participate militarily, had bucked them up. The Secretary felt that what was required was a coalition broader than ANZUS which could change the character of the fight.

Finally, the Secretary explained why in his opinion we could not count on UN action as the answer to the problem.

Ambassador Spender then spoke about the difficulties of the situation in Australia at this time where an election campaign is under way which will not end until the election on May 29. He thought that the time element is extremely important and that an action which would be feasible after May 29 might not be feasible before that date. Untimely interjection of the issue might result in the election of a government whose policies would be contrary to our long-term aims. It was therefore important to him to have our estimate of whether the French situation might deteriorate hopelessly in the next two months if nothing were done. Admiral Radford expressed the view that if the French were willing to continue the fight he saw no reason why the situation should deteriorate in the next two months to the point where it would be irretrievable. General Smith pointed out, however, that if Dien Bien Phu falls before Geneva the pressures on the French to reach a settlement at any cost would be almost uncontrollable.

Ambassador Spender thought that the problem had two aspects: one the short term and one the long term. The *ad hoc* coalition would be directed toward the immediate problem. For the long term it is important that the independence of the Associated States be fully completed and their political integrity guaranteed. The Secretary agreed that it would be unwise to commit ourselves unless we were sure of the full independence of the Associated States and the French would be willing to share the responsibility for training.

Ambassador Munro then spoke briefly about the situation in New Zealand where he said elections would not be held until November. For his Government, however, the attitude of the United Kingdom would be of the greatest significance. He also pointed out that New Zealand had very precise commitments with regard to the Middle East and the Secretary's proposal would involve changing them. The New Zealand Government would wish to know exactly what commitments our proposal would involve for them. Sir Percy then said that the Australian Cabinet was meeting tomorrow and his Government also would be interested in knowing the type of military assistance contemplated. Could or would the fighting be localized? Would we envisage the interdiction of supply lines in China? What would be the consequences if China openly entered the war?

Admiral Radford expressed the view that the contribution of an Australian carrier would be satisfactory and, indeed, excellent. He likewise thought that a New Zealand naval effort comparable to its contribution in Korea would be satisfactory. He thought that the interjection of added air power now would materially change the picture, plus some naval patrols. He did not think that the Chinese would openly intervene with troops and did not think that China was in a good position for a large effort in the area. With regard to the broader question, the Chinese have seen the Secretary's statement of last September which put them on notice that if they intervened the war would spread. He repeated, however, in his view added air power would be enough to take care of the situation at the moment.

General Smith added that he did not believe what we do will need to cause Chinese intervention and the Secretary commented that if that happened we would need to consult together. We don't think this situation will arise but if it does it should be possible to knock out their airfields and engage in certain activities along the South China coast.

Turning to the UN problem, Sir Percy inquired whether on the assumption that agreement was reached regarding the coalition we contemplated later getting UN authority for our action. The Secretary replied that we did. He was thinking in terms of invoking the Uniting for Peace Resolution with the idea of sending observation teams to the border. He also had in mind that through the UN we would call on others to make contributions to broaden the base as much as possible. This, however, would be in addition to the group we envisaged which was indispensable and would act under the provisions of Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Sir Percy inquired whether we ruled out the possibility of a temporary UN trusteeship in conjunction with our military effort. He thought that this might gain Arab–Asian support. The Secretary stated, and Ambassador Munro agreed with him, that he did not like the trusteeship idea. In his view a trusteeship would have undesirable connotations, particularly in anti-colonial areas of the world, and that the answer was to be found in real independence for the Associated States.

In conclusion the two Ambassadors stated that they would report immediately to their Governments. Both agreed personally that action must be taken. Finally, the Secretary stressed again that unless it is known by the time of Geneva that the coalition was at least in the process of being set up, the situation would probably be lost and he could not guarantee that the United States Government and Congress would go along. He felt strongly that with the passage of time the danger would increase and the capacity for united action would be reduced. It would be difficult to hold the unity of the free world if we waited until the danger was at our very doorstep. He thought it was to our credit that the United States Government was now willing to play its full part in the proposed coalition and that this willingness should not be taken for granted forever. If the danger is not recognized by the British Commonwealth, which is much closer to the danger than we are, we will find it hard to move in the matter but [*and?*] we may write it off. The decision is up to the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

Editorial Note

At 8:20 p. m., April 4, 1954, President Eisenhower held an off-the-record meeting on Indochina at the White House. According to the log of the President's daily appointments, the following officials were present: John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State; Walter Bedell Smith, the Under Secretary of State; Douglas MacArthur II, the Counselor of the Department of State; Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Roger M. Kyes, Deputy Secretary of Defense. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments")

In his memoirs, Sherman Adams, Assistant to the President, described the meeting as follows: "at a Sunday night meeting in the upstairs study at the White House Eisenhower had agreed with Dulles and Radford on a plan to send American forces to Indo-China under certain strict conditions. It was to be, first and most important, a joint action with the British, including Australian and New Zealand troops, and, if possible, participating units from such Far Eastern countries as the Philippines and Thailand so that the forces would have Asiatic representation. Secondly, the French would have to continue to fight in Indo-China and bear a full share of responsibility until the war was over. Eisenhower was also concerned that American intervention in Indo-China might be interpreted as protection of French colonialism. He added a condition that would guarantee future independence to the Indo-Chinese states of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia." (Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1961), page 122)

No other record of the session has been found.

751G.00/4–554: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT

PARIS, April 5, 1954—1 a. m.
[Received April 4—9:43 p. m.]

3710. Limit distribution.[1] Urgent. I was called at 11 o'clock Sunday night[2] and asked to come immediately to Matignon where a restricted Cabinet meeting was in progress.

On arrival Bidault received me in Laniel's office and was joined in a few minutes by Laniel. They said that immediate armed intervention of US carrier aircraft at Dien Bien Phu is now necessary to save the situation.

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[1] The source text included the following note with regard to distribution: "This message was read by Mr. MacArthur (C) at 10:15 p. m. and he informed the Secretary, Under Secretary Smith, Mr. Merchant (EUR) and Admiral Radford at 10:30 p. m. 4/4/54."

[2] Apr. 4.

Navarre reports situation there now in state of precarious equilibrium and that both sides are doing best to reinforce—Viet Minh are bringing up last available reinforcements which will way outnumber any reinforcing French can do by parachute drops. Renewal of assault by reinforced Viet Minh probable by middle or end of week. Without help by then fate of Dien Bien Phu will probably be sealed.

Ely brought back report from Washington that Radford gave him his personal assurance that if situation at Dien Bien Phu required US naval air support he would do his best to obtain such help from US Government.[3] Because of this information from Radford as reported by Ely, French Government now asking for US carrier aircraft support at Dien Bien Phu. Navarre feels that a relatively minor US effort could turn the tide but naturally hopes for as much help as possible.

French report Chinese intervention in Indochina already fully established as follows:

First. Fourteen technical advisors at Giap headquarters plus numerous others at division level. All under command of Chinese Communist General Ly Chen-hou who is stationed at Giap headquarters.

Second. Special telephone lines installed, maintained and operated by Chinese personnel.

Third. Forty 37 mm. anti-aircraft guns radar-controlled at Dien Bien Phu. These guns operated by Chinese and evidently are from Korea. These AA guns are now shooting through clouds to bring down French aircraft.

Fourth. One thousand supply trucks of which 500 have arrived since 1 March, all driven by Chinese army personnel.

Fifth. Substantial material help in guns, shells, etc., as is well known.

Bidault said that French Chief of Air Staff wished US be informed that US air intervention at Dien Bien Phu could lead to Chinese Communist air attack on delta airfields. Nevertheless, government was making request for aid.

Bidault closed by saying that for good or evil the fate of Southeast Asia now rested on Dien Bien Phu. He said that Geneva would be won or lost depending on outcome at Dien Bien Phu. This was reason for French request for this very serious action on our part.

He then emphasized necessity for speed in view of renewed attack which is expected before end of week. He thanked US for prompt action on airlift for French paratroops. He then said that he had received Dulles' proposal for Southeast Asian coalition, and that he would answer as soon as possible later in week as restricted Cabinet session not competent to make this decision.

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[3] The pledge by Admiral Radford is cited by General Ely in his memoirs (Paul Ely, *Mémoires: L'Indochine dans la tourmente*, pp. 76–77, 82–83). U.S. records of the meetings between General Ely and United States officials at Washington, Mar. 20–26, 1954, contain no reference to such an undertaking by Admiral Radford. Regarding the Ely visit, see pp. 1137–1160 *passim*. See also memorandum of Eisenhower–Dulles telephone conversation of Apr. 5, p. 1241.

New Subject. I passed on Norstad's concern that news of airlift (Deptel 3470, April 3)[4] might leak as planes assembled, Pleven was called into room. He expressed extreme concern as any leak would lead to earlier Viet Minh attack. He said at all costs operation must be camouflaged as training exercise until troops have arrived. He is preparing them as rapidly as possible and they will be ready to leave in a week. Bidault and Laniel pressed him to hurry up departure date of troops and he said he would do his utmost.

DILLON

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[4] For text, see footnote 1, p. 1219.

751G.5/4–454 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom[1]

TOP SECRET
NIACT

WASHINGTON, April 4, 1954—11:47 p. m.

5179. Eyes only for Ambassador from the Secretary. Please deliver following message from the President to Prime Minister:[2]

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[1] The source text indicates that this telegram was drafted by Douglas MacArthur II, Counselor of the Department of State. The file copy is accompanied by a memorandum of June 30, 1965, from MacArthur, then Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, to Grant G. Hilliker, Deputy Executive Secretary, Executive Secretariat, Department of State, which read as follows:

"In connection with the Department's Top Secret telegram 5179 to London dated April 4, 1954, which conveyed a message from the President to Prime Minister Churchill, I note that I am listed as the drafting officer and the authorizing officer.

"For the record I should note that I recall that I participated in the preparation of this message with Secretary Dulles and President Eisenhower and that the draft as finally approved by the President, with some modifications and changes, was sent to me in the Department by the White House for transmission very late in the night of April 4 (the message was put on the wire just before midnight). In view of the urgency of the message and the time difference between Washington and London (it was already about 5 a. m. London time), I delivered to S/S the draft which had hand-written modifications from the White House. S/S transmitted the message immediately from the draft which did not, I believe, have any indication of the drafting officials. Subsequently, S/S typed up a clean copy of the message. In this clean copy and since I authorized the message, I was listed as the sole drafting officer whereas both Secretary Dulles and President Eisenhower should also have been listed as they participated in the preparation of the message."

[2] In telegram 4367 from London, Apr. 5, 6 p. m., Ambassador Aldrich reported that due to garbles it had only then become possible to send the message from the President to the Prime Minister. (751G.5/4–554)

By memorandum of Apr. 6, the White House informed Secretary Dulles that President Eisenhower had received the following response from Prime Minister Churchill:

"My dear friend,

"I have received your most important message of April 4. We are giving it earnest Cabinet consideration. Winston." (751G.00/4–654)

Begin text.

"Dear Winston:

"I am sure that like me you are following with the deepest interest and anxiety the daily reports of the gallant fight being put up by the French at Dien Bien Phu. Today, the situation there does not seem hopeless.

"But regardless of the outcome of this particular battle, I fear that the French cannot alone see the thing through, this despite the very substantial assistance in money and matériel that we are giving them. It is no solution simply to urge the French to intensify their efforts, and if they do not see it through, and Indochina passes into the hands of the Communists, the ultimate effect on our and your global strategic position with the consequent shift in the power ratio throughout Asia and the Pacific could be disastrous and, I know, unacceptable to you and me. It is difficult to see how Thailand, Burma and Indonesia could be kept out of Communist hands. This we cannot afford. The threat to Malaya, Australia and New Zealand would be direct. The offshore island chain would be broken. The economic pressures on Japan which would be deprived of non-Communist markets and sources of food and raw materials would be such, over a period of time, that it is difficult to see how Japan could be prevented from reaching an accommodation with the Communist world which would combine the manpower and natural resources of Asia with the industrial potential of Japan. This has led us to the hard conclusion that the situation in Southeast Asia requires us urgently to take serious and far-reaching decisions.

"Geneva is less than four weeks away. There the possibility of the Communists driving a wedge between us will, given the state of mind in France, be infinitely greater than at Berlin. I can understand the very natural desire of the French to seek an end to this war which has been bleeding them for eight years. But our painstaking search for a way out of the impasse has reluctantly forced us to the conclusion that there is no negotiated solution of the Indochina problem which in its essence would not be either a face-saving device to cover a French surrender or a face-saving device to cover a Communist retirement. The first alternative is too serious in its broad strategic implications for us and for you to be acceptable. Apart from its effects in Southeast Asia itself, where you and the Commonwealth have direct and vital interests, it would have the most serious repercussions in North Africa, in Europe and elsewhere. Here at home it would cause a widespread loss of confidence in the cooperative system. I think it is not too much to say that the future of France as a great power would be fatally affected. Perhaps France will never again be the great power it was, but a sudden vacuum wherever French power is, would be difficult for us to cope with.

"Somehow we must contrive to bring about the second alternative. The preliminary lines of our thinking were sketched out by Foster in his speech last Monday night when he said that under the conditions of today the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community, and that in our view this possibility should now be met by united action and not passively accepted. He has also talked intimately with Roger Makins.

"I believe that the best way to put teeth in this concept and to bring greater moral and material resources to the support of the French effort is through the establishment of a new, *ad hoc* grouping or coalition composed of nations which have a vital concern in the checking of Communist expansion in the area. I have in mind in addition to our two countries, France, the Associated States, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines. The United States Government would expect to play its full part in such a coalition. The coalition we have in mind would not be directed against Communist China. But if, contrary to our belief, our efforts to save Indochina and the British Commonwealth position to the south should in any way increase the jeopardy to Hong Kong, we would expect to be with you there. I suppose that the United Nations should somewhere be recognized, but I am not confident that, given the Soviet veto, it could act with needed speed and vigor.

"I would contemplate no role for Formosa or the Republic of Korea in the political construction of this coalition.

"The important thing is that the coalition must be strong and it must be willing to join the fight if necessary. I do not envisage the need of any appreciable ground forces on your or our part. If the members of the alliance are sufficiently resolute it should be able to make clear to the Chinese Communists that the continuation of their material support to the Viet Minh will inevitably lead to the growing power of the forces arrayed against them.

"My colleagues and I are deeply aware of the risks which this proposal may involve but in the situation which confronts us there is no course of action or inaction devoid of dangers and I know no man who has firmly grasped more nettles than you. If we grasp this one together I believe that we will enormously increase our chances of bringing the Chinese to believe that their interests lie in the direction of a discreet disengagement. In such a contingency we could approach the Geneva conference with the position of the free world not only unimpaired but strengthened.

"Today we face the hard situation of contemplating a disaster brought on by French weakness and the necessity of dealing with it before it develops. This means frank talk with the French. In many ways the situation corresponds to that which you describe so brilliantly in the second chapter of 'Their Finest Hour', when history made clear that the French strategy and dispositions before the 1940 breakthrough should have been challenged before the blow fell.

"I regret adding to your problems. But in fact it is not I, but our enemies who add to them. I have faith that by another act of fellowship in the face of peril we shall find a spiritual vigor which will prevent our slipping into the quagmire of distrust.

"If I may refer again to history, we failed to halt Hirohito, Mussolini and Hitler by not acting in unity and in time. That marked the beginning of many years of stark tragedy and desperate peril. May it not be that our nations have learned something from that lesson?

"So profoundly do I believe that the effectiveness of the coalition principle is at stake that I am prepared to send Foster or Bedell to visit you this week, at the earliest date convenient to you. Whoever comes would spend a day in Paris to avoid French pique, the cover would be preparation for Geneva.

"With warm regard

"Ike."

End text.

DULLES

751G.00/4–554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 5, 1954—11 a. m.
[Received 5 : 11 a. m.]

3711. Limit distribution. In connection with Embassy telegram 3710,[1] Bidault told me that he is more convinced than ever that Soviets very much desire a cease-fire and truce in Indochina because of their deep concern of possible action by Chinese if fighting continues.

He said that Vinogradov[2] came to see him again and literally pleaded with him to arrange a truce with Ho Chi-minh, saying that fighting in Indochina simply must stop.

DILLON

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[1] Dated Apr. 5, p. 1236.

[2] Sergey Aleksandrovich Vinogradov, Soviet Ambassador in France.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Presidential Telephone Conversation, Monday, April 5, 1954, 8:27 a. m.[1]

Secy. Dulles called—

He received cable from Amb. Dillon (?),[2] about Radford's mention of possible U.S. naval & air support at Dienbienphu, going on to describe extent of Chinese Communist intervention. They are regrouping & reorganizing, in attempt to throw in all their forces. DDE supposes Radford thought he was talking to someone in strict confidence—but says he should never have told foreign country he would do his best because they then start putting pressure on us. Dulles said in talks with Radford and Ely, feeling was unanimous & strong that we must not & could not enter into fight until we had political aspects cleared. Radford did not give any committal talk. Cannot risk our prestige in defeat. DDE said such move is impossible. In the absence of some kind of arrangement getting support of Congress, would be completely unconstitutional & indefensible. On the other hand, we satisfied every whim they ask for—they were talking about more ships that would fly with their pilots off our fleet. Radford & Dulles talked about it early this morning. Radford quite reconciled to fact that it is political impossibility at present time—has no idea of recommending this action. DDE suggests taking a look to see if anything else can be done—but we cannot engage in active war.[3]

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[1] The drafter of this memorandum has not been identified. A memorandum of the same telephone conversation, prepared by Phyllis D. Bernau of the office of the Secretary of State, is in Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations".

[2] Reference is to telegram 3710 from Paris, Apr. 5, p. 1236.

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[3] The Secretary's files include a memorandum of a telephone conversation with Admiral Radford at 8:31 a.m., which read as follows: "The Sec. called and said he spoke to the President, who feels we have to say we cannot commit an act of war except under the kind of program discussed with Bonnet on Saturday, and the Sec. said we are pressing for it. The Sec. asked if he could think of any alternative. Radford said Carney said he has seen messages there are pilots in France, and we could get planes there in a week for these pilots. Radford will check on this.

"The Sec. asked if he thought the intelligence about Chinese intervention could be mentioned on the Hill either openly or in disguised form. Radford said he felt it could do no particular harm." (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations")

751G.5/4–554 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 5, 1954—9:29 a. m.
PRIORITY

3482. Eyes only for Ambassador from Secretary. As I personally explained to Ely in presence of Radford, it is not possible for US to commit belligerent acts in Indochina without full political understanding with France and other countries. In addition, Congressional action would be required. After conference at highest level, I must confirm this position. US is doing everything possible as indicated my 5175 [2] to prepare public, Congressional and Constitutional basis for united action in Indochina. However, such action is impossible except on coalition basis with active British Commonwealth participation. Meanwhile US prepared, as has been demonstrated, to do everything short of belligerency.

FYI US cannot and will not be put in position of alone salvaging British Commonwealth interests in Malaya, Australia and New Zealand. This matter now under discussion with UK at highest level.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by the Secretary of State. Secretary Dulles transmitted the text of this telegram to London for Ambassador Aldrich in telegram 5181, Apr. 5. (751G.5/4–554)

[2] See footnote 1, p. 1225.

751G.00/4-554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 5, 1954—8 p. m.

[Received 2:26 p. m.]

3729. Limit distribution. I delivered message Deptel 3482 [1] to Bidault Monday evening.[2] He asked me to tell Secretary that he personally could well understand position US Government and would pass on your answer to Laniel.

He asked me to say once more that unfortunately the time for formulating coalitions has passed as the fate of Indochina will be decided in the next ten days at Dien-Bien-Phu. As I left he said that even though French must fight alone they would continue fighting and he prayed God they would be successful.

DILLON

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[1] *Supra.*
[2] Apr. 5.

751G.00/4-554

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] April 5, 1954.

Subject: Indochina, President's message to Churchill.[1]

Participants: Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador.
Mr. MacArthur.

Pursuant to instructions, this morning I gave Sir Roger Makins a copy of the President's message to Prime Minister Churchill, explaining that the message had been sent off by the President late last night. Sir Roger read it and said he thought it was "a very good message". He said he had sent a telegram last Saturday to London reporting his meeting with the Secretary on Friday,[2] and that he had followed it up with a message yesterday of comment on the US concept for joint action. He felt that the message he had sent yesterday fitted in very well with the President's message to the Prime Minister.

Sir Roger said he was meeting later today with the Australian and New Zealand Ambassadors, and asked me if they had been brought fairly well into the picture. I replied that the Secretary had seen the Australian and New Zealand Ambassadors yesterday and had given them a good understanding of our views along the general lines which he had laid out to Sir Roger.

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[1] For text, see telegram 5179 to London, Apr. 4, p. 1238.
[2] For the memorandum of the Dulles-Makins conversation of Apr. 2, see p. 1214.

Sir Roger asked how the meeting with Bonnet last Saturday[3] had come out. I said that the Secretary had told Bonnet the lines along which we were thinking. I said the French were, therefore, informed of our views and Bonnet had said he would report at once to Bidault. I said Bonnet had obviously not been in a position to advance any comments of his own.

Reverting to the President's message to Churchill, Sir Roger said that in his message to London yesterday he had suggested that Lord Alexander[4] might come over to this country to talk to our people about Indochina and Southeast Asia. His thought was that such a visit might not attract much attention since Alexander had been scheduled to come over for some time. However, Sir Roger thought it was preferable for the Secretary or the Under Secretary to go to London.

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[3] For the memorandum of the Dulles–Bonnet conversation of Apr. 3, see p. 1225.

[4] Field Marshal Lord Alexander, the British Minister of Defence.

751G.00/4–554

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] April 5, 1954.

With reference to the Top Secret Memorandum of Conversation[1] which I sent you earlier today covering my talk with Sir Roger Makins this morning about Indochina, I left out one important point covered in our discussion.

During the course of our talk I told Sir Roger that you had had a meeting with a small bipartisan group of Congressional leaders on Saturday morning.[2] I said that I could tell him in confidence that as a result of this meeting we felt that if there were really united action taken by the countries that were directly threatened, the United States would be able to play its full part. On the other hand, if the UK and Australia and New Zealand, whose vital interests would be directly threatened if Indochina fell, were not enough concerned to do anything about it or join in any effective form of united action, there would be opposition on the part of the US Congress and people to having the US pick up the burden on a unilateral basis. In other words, we would not be disposed to commit our forces to defend British and Commonwealth interests in Malaya, Australia, and New Zealand when the British, Australians, and New Zealanders simply sat on their hands. If, indeed, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand were unwilling to undertake any effective joint action, it would raise very great doubts in the minds of many Congressional leaders and others as to the utility of the US supporting collective and cooperative endeavors with our friends and allies. This in turn could certainly have a most serious impact on the support we were contributing to collective arrangements in areas other than Southeast Asia. Sir Roger said he could understand this and assumed that one of the passages in the President's letter which he had just read referred to this.

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[1] *Supra.*

[2] Regarding the meeting of Saturday morning, Apr. 3, see memorandum for the file, p. 1224.

He then said that the question of what the British military commitments would be with respect to united action in Indochina was important. At the present time, he said, the British have no reserve of ground forces that they could send to Indochina. The only reserve they had was tied up in the Egyptian Canal Zone. If an agreement were reached with the Egyptians covering the Suez Canal Base, there would be some ground forces which could be deployed to other areas, but whether HMG would consider deploying any of them to Indochina, he did not know. He indicated clearly that at the present time the only contribution HMG could make in Indochina was naval power.

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR II

Eisenhower Library, White House Office, "Legislative Leadership Conferences"

Memorandum by the Assistant Staff Secretary to the President (Minnich) [1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON, undated.]

. . . .

At the Legislative Conference of April 5, 1954, Gov. Stassen made a presentation on the Mutual Security Program to be recommended to Congress for Fiscal 1955. About one-third of the funds involved were earmarked for Indo China.

One legislator voiced several complaints about the program, mostly in respect to the enlarged portion devoted to economic support. This was particularly true in regard to Formosa and Indo China. He went on to take exception to the way in which Mutual Security funds had been shifted from one purpose to another during the past year. Gov. Stassen pointed out that the shift had been for the purpose of helping the cause of the free world in Indo China and that it had been made only after bipartisan consultation.

The President intervened to point out that if Dienbienphu had fallen two weeks previously, the leadership conference that morning would be occurring in a very tense situation. Thanks to its resistance thus far, the Communist position vis-à-vis the Geneva Conference was considerably different. The President felt that should the French be able to hold on at Dienbienphu, they would be making the greatest contribution possible.

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[1] For information on this memorandum, see footnote 1, p. 1023.

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S/S–NSC files, lot 63 D 351, NSC 5405 Series

Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 5, 1954.

NSC Discussion of Possible U.S. Intervention in Indochina[1]

1. The basic decision which the NSC should first reach is whether or not the U.S. should commit its own armed forces into Indochina in the contingency that such action was necessary to prevent the fall of Indochina to Communist control.

2. If the NSC decides that U.S. intervention would be undertaken if necessary, it should next decide, at least tentatively, the form and conditions of U.S. intervention (1) whether the U.S. should go alone to the aid of France and the Associated States or whether the U.S. should seek to organize a regional grouping for intervention in Indochina, and (2) what the objectives of such intervention should be.

3. If the NSC decides that the U.S. should seek to organize a regional grouping to support intervention in Indochina the U.S. will then have to decide:

a. What should be the composition and form of a regional grouping and how should it be brought into existence;
b. What commitments to the members of the grouping should the U.S. be prepared to undertake in order to secure their participation;
c. What agreements should be secured from members of the regional grouping as to the support they would give to any necessary intervention in Indochina.

4. If the NSC decides that the U.S. should intervene if necessary there will be other immediate practical problems for the U.S. Government to consider; such as:

a. How to secure Congressional support for the decision;
b. How best to use such a U.S. decision in countering any French inclination to negotiate an unfavorable settlement;
c. What conditions should be met by the French in order to promise success both in getting international support and in conducting the

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[1] See the memorandum of discussion at the 192d Meeting of the National Security Council, Apr. 6, p. 1250.

military operations; and how to secure French performance of the required conditions;

d. How to secure from the French and Associated States the necessary invitation for or cooperation with U.S. or regional participation.

ROBERT R. BOWIE

Radford papers, Indochina papers/Geneva Conference

Memorandum for the Record by Captain George W. Anderson, Jr., Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] 5 April 1954.

At 1200 this date, General Valluy, Head of the French Military Mission to the United States, accompanied by Captain Traub of his staff, and Lieutenant Colonel Cocke, interpreter, called on Admiral Radford. Also present was Captain Anderson.

General Valluy stated that he had received a most important cable from General Ely, which he (General Ely) desired passed to Admiral Radford at the earliest possible time. General Valluy read the cable which was interpreted as follows:

> The following communication has been made to the U.S. Ambassador in France on the evening of 4 April.
>
> Admiral Radford had stated to General Ely that if intervention should appear necessary to avoid a difficult situation at Dien Bien Phu, he would consider direct support of U.S. Air Forces, both carrier and land based, in Indo-China on request of the French Government.
>
> The French Government requests this intervention for the benefit of Dien Bien Phu itself, and requests also that, should there be a reaction by the Chinese Air Forces, the necessary steps be taken to organize their interception.
>
> Request that you (General Valluy) communicate this to Admiral Radford, and draw his attention to the urgent character of the requested intervention as General Navarre anticipates a resumption of the Viet Minh attack which could be decisive within the course of the coming week.

Admiral Radford informed General Valluy that he had already received this information from the U.S. Secretary of State, who had received the request from the U.S. Ambassador in Paris.

Admiral Radford informed General Valluy that he (Admiral Radford) had told General Ely during the course of his visit that no actual participation of U.S. forces could be expected unless it had been asked for by the French Government. He had explained to General Ely the problems which were involved in rendering such support in the light of U.S. constitutional processes. On the occasion when General Ely had called upon the Secretary of State, Admiral Radford had brought to the attention of the Secretary of State the question that General Ely had posed to him relative to U.S. assistance. Mr. Dulles had further explained to General Ely the fact that such a request would require the most careful consideration by the United States Government.

Admiral Radford informed General Valluy that this matter was now being considered at the highest levels of the two governments, and that it was being handled for the U.S. by John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, himself.

G. W. ANDERSON, JR.

751G.5622/4–654 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT

PARIS, April 6, 1954—1 p. m.
[Received 7:36 a. m.]

3738. Limit distribution. Bidault called me over at noon today and told me French Cabinet had taken news in Deptel 3482 [1] better than he had expected. He said that in view of urgency of situation and fact that Navarre felt that even a relatively small additional intervention by air power might save the day at Dien Bien Phu, they were making following request in order to meet US necessities as outlined in reference telegram.

1. That US provide French immediately with 10 to 20 B–29s aircraft together with necessary personnel to maintain these aircraft in operation.
2. French have flight crews available in Indochina who can keep approximately 10 planes in operation. Number of planes to be supplied, therefore, depends on number required to keep 10 continually operative.
3. As runways in Indochina are probably too short to handle B–29s, French hope that we could arrange to base them on US facilities in Philippines. If this were the case US would also be expected to supply necessary bombs and ammunition.

General Valluy being informed simultaneously in order be prepared discuss technical details in Washington. French believe that prompt intervention of this nature in next few days might very well break up reinforcement columns moving on Dien Bien Phu and save the day.

DILLON

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[1] Dated Apr. 5, p. 1242.

751G.00/4–654 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 6, 1954—4 p. m.
[Received 10:26 a. m.]

3740. Limit distribution. I feel that French requests for assistance at Dien Bien Phu and our reaction thereto are bound to have a profound effect on attitude France will take at Geneva. French Government, although very disappointed, can well understand reasons for US inability to comply with request in Embtel 3710.[1]

However, if we cannot find a way to comply with their alternative suggestion contained in Embtel 3738[2] and if Dien Bien Phu should fall, French Government will inevitably lay a major share of blame for loss of Dien Bien Phu on our inability or unwillingness to help. This will necessarily strengthen already powerful group in French Government who wish for peace at any price in Indochina. For these reasons, I sincerely hope that it will prove possible to grant in one form or another, latest French request for assistance. (Embtel 3738).

DILLON

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[1] Dated Apr. 5, p. 1236.
[2] *Supra.*

751G.5/4–654 : Telegram

The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Aldrich) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY LONDON, April 6, 1954—3 p. m.
[Received 11:04 a. m.]

4382. Eyes only for Secretary. In compliance with Deptel 5090,[1] I saw Eden this morning and made points referred to therein and embodied those in an informal memorandum which I left with him, a copy of which is going forward to you by pouch.[2]

Eden had already seen President's letter to Prime Minister (Deptel 5179).[3] Eden stated questions covered would be considered at highest level as soon as possible and that in meantime he wished to say that he felt seriousness of military situation in Indochina had been exaggerated saying, "French cannot lose the war between now and the coming of the rainy season however badly they may conduct it." He will consult with Prime Minister, Cabinet and Joint Chiefs of Staff and will let us know soonest whether it is thought that you or Bedell Smith might profitably come here prior to meeting in Paris.

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[1] Dated Apr. 1, p. 1202.
[2] Transmitted in despatch 3357 from London, Apr. 6; for text, see vol. XVI, p. 496.
[3] Dated Apr. 4, p. 1238.

ALDRICH

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 192d Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, April 6, 1954[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

The following were present at the 192nd Meeting of the Council: The President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission; the Under Secretary of State; the Deputy Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Army and Navy; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; the Chief of Naval Operations; the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force; the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; Robert R. Bowie, Department of State; Herbert Miller, Central Intelligence Agency (for Item 3); the White House Staff Secretary; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting, together with the main points taken.

1. *NSC Action No. 1074–a* (Report on NSC Action No. 1074–*a*, dated April 5, 1954)[2]

Mr. Cutler briefed the Council very thoroughly on the content of this report dealing with the question of whether or not the United

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Apr. 7. The diary of James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President, contains the following Apr. 6 notation regarding this meeting: "NSC meeting in P. M. on Indo-china—I announced it as just weekly meeting which was 'more convenient' to hold on Tuesday this week—situation getting crucial—Fr. want 50 more bombers—and they are running short of pilots—could use 'American volunteers'—also considering use of troops eventually." (Eisenhower Library, James C. Hagerty papers) For a diary note on this meeting by Vice President Nixon, see editorial note, *infra*.

[2] For NSC Action No. 1074, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 190th Meeting of the National Security Council, Mar. 25, p. 1163.

Copy number 5 of an Apr. 5 Planning Board draft report on NSC Action No. 1074–*a*, labeled "Mr. Bowie" (Robert R. Bowie, Director of the Policy Planning Staff and State Department representative on the NSC Planning Board) is in S/P–NSC files, lot 62 D 1, "Indochina", as are antecedent drafts of Apr. 1 and 3.

States should intervene with armed forces in Indochina in the event that there was no other means of saving the area from Communist control. After having read the first eight pages of the paper, which were a statement of the problem, Mr. Cutler summarized the principal points in the Annex, which described the various alternate courses of action from which the United States could choose if it decided to intervene in Indochina. At the conclusion of his briefing, Mr. Cutler called the Council's attention to the split view in the Intelligence Advisory Committee with respect to the Chinese Communist reaction to U.S. intervention. He then called upon the Director of Central Intelligence to brief the Council on the latest intelligence regarding the situation at Dien Bien Phu.

Before beginning his intelligence briefing, Mr. [Allen] Dulles explained that the split of opinion in the Intelligence Advisory Committee regarding Chinese Communist overt intervention was perhaps not as wide as it seemed at first glance.[3] All the members of the Committee recognized that if the United States intervened in such force as to contrive the defeat of the Vietminh, there would be very great danger of overt Chinese Communist intervention. The only issue, therefore, was one of degree. Some members of the IAC felt that there was a better than fifty percent chance that the Chinese Communists would intervene. Mr. Dulles said that he personally felt that there was less than a fifty percent chance. At any rate, the contingency of Chinese Communist intervention was very significant and should be taken into consideration in the Council's deliberations.

Turning to the latest intelligence on the situation at Dien Bien Phu, Mr. Dulles indicated that it had not greatly changed in the last few

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The Apr. 5 text is presumably that considered by the National Security Council on Apr. 6. The text of the Apr. 5 draft is identical with the draft report printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 298–331. (*Note:* the Apr. 5 draft in lot file 62 D 1, also printed *ibid.*, is a report by the NSC Planning Board pursuant to NSC Action No. 1074–*a* of Mar. 25, not the text of the action itself.)

For a document titled "Army Position on NSC Action No. 1074–*a*," undated, see *ibid.*, p. 332.

[3] The Intelligence Advisory Committee transmitted its comments on the intelligence aspects of NSC Action No. 1074–*a* to the National Security Council by memorandum of Apr. 6. The memorandum read in part as follows: "the Intelligence Advisory Committee is divided on the question as to whether Communist China in this situation [United States intervention in Indochina] would decide upon overt intervention in Indochina. The Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believe that in such circumstances, the chances are better than even that the Chinese Communists would not openly intervene in Indochina, even if they believed that failure to intervene would mean the defeat at that time of the Viet Minh field forces in Indochina. The Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–2, Intelligence, Department of the Army; and the Director of Intelligence, USAF, believe that in such circumstances, the chances are better than even that the Communists would accept the risk involved and that the Chinese Communists would intervene openly and in force in an effort to save the Communist position in Indochina." (S/P–NSC files, lot 62 D 1, "Indochina")

days. Action had slackened off as the Vietminh forces were reconstituted after their extremely heavy losses.

After indicating in detail the changes in the positions at Dien Bien Phu, Mr. Dulles commented on the French reports that 20,000 additional Vietminh troops were on their way to reinforce the Vietminh at Dien Bien Phu. If true, it would take these forces several days to reach the fortress from the Tonkin Delta or other distant points. The French expected the Vietminh to renew their mass attacks in the next few days, certainly within ten days.

The French losses to date in this action amounted to approximately four battalions, three of which had been replaced. The wounded presented a very severe problem, because accurate enemy anti-aircraft fire prevented evacuation of French casualties. This fire also made it extremely hazardous to airdrop supplies and replacements. Ground haze and frequent storms added to the difficulties of the French Union Air Forces.

The Vietminh losses were estimated as between ten and twenty thousand. To date there had been replacement of only three thousand, and Colonel de Castries had stated that the enemy was short of ammunition.

Mr. Dulles then turned to the question of Chinese Communist support of the Vietminh rebels. There was no confirmation of recent sensational reports that the Chinese Communists were providing Chinese personnel as well as military matériel to the rebels at Dien Bien Phu. Doubtless they had stepped up the provision of supplies, and there were probably two thousand Chinese advisers who had been with the Vietminh forces for a long time. There was, however, no confirmation of the report that a Chinese General was participating in the attack at Dien Bien Phu, or that the Chinese had provided the Vietminh with radar-controlled 37-millimetre guns. (Admiral Radford also doubted the existence of guns of this calibre.) Finally, said Mr. Dulles, there was yet no proof of the further French report that Chinese soldiers were manning some of the anti-aircraft artillery positions around Dien Bien Phu. General Cogny suspects this to be the case because the fire has been so accurate.

Mr. Dulles then commented on forces available to the Chinese Communists if they did undertake to intervene overtly. For this purpose there were five Chinese Communist divisions deployed along the border of Indochina, though there had been no change in their deployment in recent weeks. Within some 300 miles of the border there were in addition seven Chinese armies, numbering in all about 200,000 men, which could be sent into Indochina along the four available roads. With respect to Chinese Communist aircraft, no MIG–15's were currently concentrated on airfields in China sufficiently close to Dien Bien Phu to enable Chinese pilots to fly to Dien Bien Phu and return.

At the conclusion of Mr. Dulles' briefing, Admiral Radford pointed out that according to his advices [*advisers*] the Dien Bien Phu garrison had sufficient food to last for three days and sufficient ammunition to last perhaps four or five days. The French were, of course, in very bad shape. They could not evacuate their wounded, and the airdrop of supplies was becoming very difficult. Precise details were lacking since the radio at Dien Bien Phu had been out of operation since Sunday afternoon, April 4, our time.

Mr. Cutler said that in order to point up the issue for the National Security Council, he wished to call attention to the estimate of the French military situation which was provided in paragraph 3 of the Planning Board's paper. This read as follows: "There is not, however, any certainty that the French have as yet reached the point of being willing to accept a settlement which is unacceptable to U.S. interests or to cease their military efforts. Moreover, regardless of the outcome of the fight at Dien Bien Phu, there is no indication that a military decision in Indochina is imminent." If this estimate remained accurate, the Council would not be obliged to decide at the present meeting whether to intervene in Indochina at once, but only whether it would be necessary to intervene at some future time if the French faced defeat.

Secretary Wilson said that there had developed quite a difference of opinion in the Defense Department on the question whether a military decision in Indochina was actually imminent. Mr. Allen Dulles added that he also thought that the statement in the Planning Board draft was now rather too optimistic. Admiral Radford supported the view of Secretary Wilson and Mr. Dulles.

The President, however, expressed the opinion that even if Dien Bien Phu were lost to the French, it could hardly be described as a military defeat, since the French would have inflicted such great losses on the enemy. The President said that to him the most depressing feature of the situation was the French failure to move anywhere else in Indochina while the seige of Dien Bien Phu goes on. Mr. Allen Dulles commented that the situation in the Tonkin Delta worried him almost more than the situation at Dien Bien Phu. The President continued his remarks, pointing out that the French Union forces seemed to have a fifty percent superiority in manpower nearly everywhere in Indochina, and he could not understand why they made no move to capitalize on this numerical superiority. As far as he was concerned, said the President with great emphasis, there was no possibility whatever of U.S. unilateral intervention in Indochina, and we had best face that fact. Even if we tried such a course, we would have to take it to Congress and fight for it like dogs, with very little hope of success. At the very least, also, we would have to be invited in by the Vietnamese.

Secretary Dulles then asked if he might speak. He said that he was, of course, not qualified to pass a judgment on the military consequences of delaying a decision to intervene in Indochina. He did, however, feel qualified to talk about political considerations. First off, with regard to Congress. To judge from his meeting last Saturday[4] together with Secretary Kyes and Admiral Radford, with eight Congressional leaders, he deduced that it would be impossible to get Congressional authorization for U.S. unilateral action in Indochina. To secure the necessary Congressional support would be contingent on meeting three conditions. One, U.S. intervention must be part of a coalition to include the other free nations of Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and the British Commonwealth nations. Secondly, the French must agree to accelerate their independence program for the Associated States so that there could be no question of U.S. support of French colonialism. Thirdly, the French must agree not to pull their forces out of the war if we put our forces in.

These three conditions, Secretary Dulles emphasized, had clearly emerged from his conversations with the Congressional leaders, and it would be a hopeless fight to try to overcome Congressional opposition to U.S. armed intervention unless we met these three conditions. This was a plain fact which the Council could not overlook even if this fact involved an undesirable delay from the military point of view.

Secretary Dulles, turning to the President, then stated that with the President's approval he had already begun to put out some feelers with the Ambassadors of the various nations whose interests were involved in the Indochina war. The most difficult situation, to judge from his conversations with the Ambassadors, would be encountered with the United Kingdom. The British Government was at present in the doldrums. Prime Minister Churchill had almost collapsed in Parliament during the debate on the hydrogen bomb. The paralysis of the British Government was almost as serious as that of the French. Despite all these difficulties, Secretary Dulles still said he would not exclude the possibility that the British would come along with us. For one thing, the danger to Malaya will be considerable if the British do not agree to do something to defend Indochina. For another, the British would have to anticipate heavy pressure from Australia and New Zealand, whose interests and security were heavily involved. To judge from his conversations with the Ambassadors, both these Commonwealth Governments were disposed to try to join with us and others in some kind of regional grouping to help defend Southeast Asia.

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[4] Regarding the meeting of Saturday, Apr. 3, see memorandum for the file, p. 1224.

Secretary Dulles said that he had seen the representatives of Thailand and the Philippines yesterday.[5] He was quite sure that they would come along with us, but unfortunately they would not bring much material help with them. He would see the representatives of the Associated States tomorrow.[6]

Secretary Dulles then said that he looked upon the decision which faced the Council today as not primarily a decision to intervene with military forces in Indochina, but as an effort to build up strength in the Southeast Asia area to such a point that military intervention might prove to be unnecessary. This objective was by no means impossible of realization if the situation in Indochina did not seriously deteriorate prior to the Geneva Conference or the advent of the rainy season and a slow-down in the fighting. And there was a fair chance that no irremediable military disaster would occur in the next thirty days unless the French will to resist should collapse. The French will to resist may be sustained if the French believe that they will get real help in the reasonably near future. In any event, it was significant that they were sending new forces from North Africa to reinforce Indochina. These forces would arrive somewhere toward the last of April or early May. This Secretary Dulles took to be an indication that the French were certainly not intending to quit the battle soon, so that if we could build a good political foundation in and around Southeast Asia, it might not be necessary to intervene with our own armed forces. If, on the other hand, the United States failed to get results in its efforts to build up a regional grouping, it would certainly be necessary to contemplate armed intervention. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff had stated in their comments to the Council on the recent Italian paper, NSC 5411,[7] there were certain risks which we could take today which we might well not be able to take later.

The Geneva negotiations, said Secretary Dulles, were now coming up. The real issue at Geneva would be whether the French would sell out to the Communists or whether there would be a settlement reflecting Communist willingness to abandon the attempt to seize control of Indochina. Which of these eventualities actually happened would depend largely on the will to resist of the Associated States and of the other free nations in the Southeast Asia area. If these states were divided they would prove easy pickings for Communist imperialism. If they remained united, and if we could effect a real political grouping, the Communists might well give up their intent to seize the area.

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[5] For memoranda of the conversations, see volume XII.

[6] See memorandum of conversation by Bonsal, Apr. 7, p. 1279.

[7] For text of NSC 5411, "U.S. Policy Toward Italy," Mar. 12, 1954, and related documentation, see volume VI.

The British position was of crucial importance. If we can get the United Kingdom to line up with us throughout Asia in resistance to Communism, and if the United Kingdom is prepared to risk the loss of Hong Kong in order to save Malaya, all of this might prove to be the beginning of the creation of a real United States policy in Asia. We have in fact lacked such a policy largely because the United Kingdom had proved consistently unwilling to go along with us on any significant policies or objectives in Asia. The chance may now be at hand, at long last, to win the British over to our side. The peril in Southeast Asia might forge the needed unity because the British stake in Malaya is so great and because Britain's two children, Australia and New Zealand, are likewise imperilled. If the British come in now they will gain assets for their position in Australia and New Zealand. If they do not, Britain will lose its remaining influence in the ANZUS countries.

In conclusion, said Secretary Dulles, it was his feeling, therefore, that the National Security Council need not at this time make any decision whether to intervene or not in Indochina. We know that under certain conditions Congress is likely to back us up. We should therefore place all our efforts on trying to organize a regional grouping for the defense of Southeast Asia prior to the opening of the Geneva Conference. If we can do so we will go into that Conference strong and united, with a good hope that we would come out of the Conference with the Communists backing down. The situation was not unlike that which existed in 1932 when Stimson tried so desperately with Sir John Simon to get the United Kingdom to join with the United States in trying to slow down the Japanese. The British, of course, had refused to follow Stimson's course. Secretary Dulles said he believed, however, that if we put our case to them strongly they may come along this time. This is the general course that Secretary Dulles recommended for Council action.

Mr. Cutler then asked Secretary Dulles whether he proposed that we go to Congress with our plan for a regional grouping for the defense of Indochina, prior to the opening of the Geneva Conference. Secretary Dulles replied in the negative. There was no use going to the Congress until we had something in the way of an organization lined up and until we got that organization to accept the three conditions which were essential if the Congress were to pass a Joint Resolution permitting U.S. participation in such a regional organization. Secretary Dulles said, however, that he felt that he had already sufficient assurance of Congressional support to feel perfectly able to talk to these other nations and to tell them that if they will go along on our proposal the Congress will permit U.S. participation in the regional grouping.

The President expressed his hostility to the notion that because we might lose Indochina we would necessarily have to lose all the rest of Southeast Asia. This had not been the view of the Council at an earlier time. Indeed, the Council had set up a Special Committee to recommend measures for saving the rest of Southeast Asia in the event that Indochina were lost.

Secretary Dulles turned to Under Secretary Smith, who was sitting behind him, and after conferring briefly, informed the Council that Secretary Smith had just told him that the Special Committee referred to by the President had just completed its recommendations.[8] If the President desired, Secretary Smith could give the Council the gist of the Special Committee's recommendations.

Secretary Smith explained that in some respects the Planning Board draft now before the Council had overtaken the report of the Special Committee, of which he had been a member. Nevertheless, the Special Committee's report paralleled the Planning Board views in that it likewise called for the creation of a regional organization designed both to try to prevent the loss of Indochina to Communism or, failing that, to oppose further Communist progress in Southeast Asia.

The President expressed warm approval for the idea of a political organization which would have for its purpose the defense of Southeast Asia even if Indochina should be lost. In any case, the creation of such a political organization for defense would be better than emergency military action.

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[8] Reference is to Part II of the Special Committee report prepared in accordance with NSC Action No. 1019 of Jan. 21, 1954 (for text of Action No. 1019, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the Council Meeting of Jan. 21, p. 986). Part II of the report, dealing with long-range policy and courses of action in Southeast Asia, was prepared by the working group of the President's Special Committee, Gen. Graves B. Erskine, chairman. General Erskine transmitted Part II to the Special Committee on Apr. 5, with a covering memorandum which read in part as follows:

"2. This report does not directly concern itself with the matter of possible military intervention in Indo-China nor with the desirability for political action vis-à-vis the French government; these matters were covered in the report of the Special Committee concerning the forthcoming Geneva Conference. [See the first editorial note, p. 1148.]

"3. This report does address itself to the fact that regardless of the outcome of current operations in Indo-China, the U.S. should in all prudence develop a regional defense posture incorporating all the Southeast Asian states.

"4. The report concludes that such an organization is essential, even if Indo-China can be retained in the Western camp; and if Indo-China should be lost, would provide the only basis on which the free world might hope to regain its position in Indo-China or failing that, to delay as long as possible the further expansion of Communism in the area."

By memorandum of Apr. 14, NSC Executive Secretary Lay transmitted Part II of the Erskine subcommittee report to the NSC Planning Board for its use in further studies. The report, Part II, the Erskine memorandum of Apr. 5, and the Lay memorandum of Apr. 14 are in S/P–NSC files, lot 62 D 1, "Indochina". The report, Part II, is printed in *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 346–358. For text of Part I of the report, which deals more specifically with Indochina, see p. 1109.

Secretary Dulles indicated, in answer to a question, that Nationalist China and the ROK should be left out of the proposed regional organization.

Mr. Cutler expressed the opinion that the Council had virtually decided not to settle at this meeting the big question of whether the United States should intervene with armed forces at some future time if no other action could ensure saving Indochina. While he understood this, he felt it desirable to ask the military to express an opinion as to whether the course of action proposed by the Secretary of State, for the creation of a regional organization, might be too slow to meet the mounting danger of the loss of Indochina.

Secretary Wilson replied that certainly the Pentagon had become very concerned in recent days that the military situation in Indochina seemed to be moving with great rapidity in the wrong direction.

The Vice President pointed out that the situation in Indochina had arisen not from outside aggression but from civil war. This was what posed the problem of intervention in all its difficulties from the point of view of Congress. The proposed regional defense organization might prove very useful as a means of resisting overt Communist aggression, but would it be effective in meeting the possible increase in internal Communist subversion, especially if Indochina fell? What do we do if a Communist revolt breaks out in Indonesia or Thailand or Burma? What do we do if the Communists send several thousands of their men to subvert Malaya? Accordingly, concluded the Vice President, at some point or other the United States must decide whether it is prepared to take action which will be effective in saving free governments from internal Communist subversion. This was the real problem, and it was quite different from Korea, where the aggressors had had to cross a national boundary.

Secretary Dulles reminded the Council of his speech of last Monday on the peril in Southeast Asia, which he said had been very well analyzed by the Vice President. The danger *was* indirect rather than direct aggression, and this was a very mixed up situation.

Secretary Wilson turned to Secretary Dulles and said, "Yes, indeed; you point out that it's a very great danger, but still you do not know what to do about it, and we have the same problem to face in Italy, France, and other areas outside of Asia." Secretary Dulles replied to Secretary Wilson by pointing out that he had used almost the same language in describing the peril in Southeast Asia as the Joint Chiefs of Staff had earlier used in their comment on the Italian paper, to the effect that we had about reached the point where we could not afford to permit the Communists to take over by any means further parts of the free world's territory.

The President expressed the opinion that the thing to do was to try to get our major allies to recognize the vital need to join in a coalition to prevent further Communist imperialism in Southeast Asia; a coalition to be joined by the Thais, the Filipinos, the British, the Australians, and the New Zealanders, together with the United States. France, it was clear, was decadent as a military power, and yet it remained a very proud and sensitive nation. This makes the problem very touchy, for the French may never agree to call for the concerted arrangement which we believed was essential.

The Vice President, turning to Secretary Dulles, asked whether he was correct in assuming that Secretary Dulles' proposal called for the creation of a regional group which would put down Communist subversion in Indonesia or any other Southeast Asian area if the government of the state in question was not itself able to cope with such subversion. In other words, did Secretary Dulles envisage this organization as a means of dealing with local Communist subversion?

Secretary Dulles answered in the affirmative, and said that this regional grouping in addition was a means of compelling some of our allies, and notably the British, to agree to join with us in creating a really effective Far Eastern policy. It was also a means of compelling the British and some of the others to reexamine their colonial policy, which had proved so ruinous to our objectives, not only in Asia, but in Egypt, Iran, and elsewhere. The effort to compel these changes could, of course, have the effect of tearing the free world coalition to pieces. Nevertheless, we could not go on forever avoiding these great issues. The peoples of the colonial states would never agree to fight Communism unless they were assured of their freedom.

Governor Stassen asked Secretary Dulles if it was not possible to state the alternatives open to the United States in a somewhat different form. As he saw it, there were three possible courses of action. We could let Indochina fall, but if we did so the chances for the creation of a coalition to defend the rest of Southeast Asia would be very slim indeed. Secondly, we ourselves could intervene and drive right up to the borders of Communist China. But in that event the Chinese Communists were very likely to intervene. In between these two extremes there was a third possibility, which was to try to hold the southern part of Indochina and form our regional grouping to assure the defense of the remaining states of the area.

The President interrupted to state with great conviction that we certainly could not intervene in Indochina and become the colonial power which succeeded France. The Associated States would certainly not agree to invite our intervention unless we had other Asiatic nations with us.

Governor Stassen, going on to develop his theory, suggested that it would be possible to put forces in Thailand and that the Thais themselves would assist in holding southern Indochina. But the President again interrupted to insist that if we could get the French and the Associated States to join in a genuine Asian grouping, there was no need to lose Indochina at all. In that case, replied Governor Stassen, it was essential to decide what we were ultimately prepared to do.

With respect to Governor Stassen's proposal, Secretary Wilson pointed out that of course unfortunately the northern part of Indochina was the most valuable part of the country, which view Admiral Radford confirmed and said that the Tonkin Delta was actually the key to the military defense of all of Southeast Asia. As the Vice President had said, you start a chain reaction if you lose Indochina. Governor Stassen argued that it was nevertheless better to lose part of Southeast Asia and to strengthen what was left, which Admiral Radford described as "a very temporary solution at best".

Mr. Cutler indicated that the exchange of views between Admiral Radford and Governor Stassen pointed up the question which he had asked of the military at the outset of the discussion. Did they believe that Indochina was actually going to be lost? Did they believe that the loss of Dien Bien Phu would be the beginning of the end?

Secretary Dulles said that his worry was that if the battle at Dien Bien Phu were lost the French might lose the will for further resistance. Admiral Radford then reminded the Council of the views of Laniel and Bidault that the fate of Indochina rested on the outcome of the battle at Dien Bien Phu. Secretary Wilson said that it was this opinion which had done so much to modify the previous military assessment of the likelihood of imminent French defeat or withdrawal in Indochina. Admiral Radford cautioned that this was not a unanimous military assessment, but it was his personal view that the French stood a very good chance of losing the battle at Dien Bien Phu and that the consequences were very hard to predict. If the battle were lost, the French might well not hold the line at Geneva. It was not merely the military repercussions, but the heavy psychological blow of losing Dien Bien Phu. This would not only be a blow to French prestige; the French would lose the flower of their own forces and would probably be deserted by the Vietnamese troops.

Secretary Humphrey asked Secretary Dulles, if he succeeded in creating his proposed coalition and the United States adopted a policy of intervening every time that local Communist forces became strong enough to attempt to subvert free governments, would this not amount to a policy of policing all the governments of the world?

The President spoke sharply to Secretary Humphrey and pointed out that no free government had yet gone Communist by its own choice.

Certainly the United States could no longer say that internal Communist subversion, as opposed to external Communist aggression, was none of our business. We had got to be a great deal more realistic than that.

Secretary Dulles stated that he continued to agree with the JCS view on this issue, namely, that we can no longer accept further Communist take-overs, whether accomplished by external or internal measures. We could no longer afford to put too fine a point on the methods.

The Vice President strongly supported the views of the Secretary of State and the President, and pointed out that the Communists had developed new techniques for conquest which we must recognize and learn to cope with. He pointed out also that everywhere he went during his recent trip to the Far East, he was made aware of the millstone which British policy represented around the neck of the United States. The British were everywhere regarded in Asia as colonialists and imperialists, and especially so in Malaya. We should not only make our own position clear in opposition to colonialism; we should insist on British assurance of their intention to grant freedom to Malaya at some future time. Secretary Dulles replied drily that he wouldn't want to underestimate the difficulties of inducing the British to issue such a declaration regarding Malaya.

Secretary Humphrey again announced his very great anxiety over what looked to him like an undertaking by the United States to prevent the emergence of Communist governments everywhere in the world. He could see no terminal point in such a process. Secretary Dulles insisted that there was no intention of having the United States police the governments of the entire world. The United States Government certainly did not particularly like the Franco Government in Spain; on the other hand, it was making no effort to destroy it.

The President, again speaking with great warmth, asked Secretary Humphrey for a reasonable alternative. Indochina was the first in a row of dominoes. If it fell its neighbors would shortly thereafter fall with it, and where did the process end? If he was correct, said the President, it would end with the United States directly behind the 8-ball. "George", said the President, "you exaggerate the case. Nevertheless in certain areas at least we cannot afford to let Moscow gain another bit of territory. Dien Bien Phu itself may be just such a critical point." That's the hard thing to decide. We are not prepared now to take action with respect to Dien Bien Phu in and by itself, but the coalition program for Southeast Asia must go forward as a matter of the greatest urgency. If we can secure this regional grouping for the defense of Indochina, the battle is two-thirds won. This grouping would give us the needed popular support of domestic opinion and of allied governments, and we might thereafter not be required to contemplate a unilateral American intervention in Indochina.

Mr. Cutler summarized the discussion to this point by stating that if the Council adopted Secretary Dulles' recommendation it would make no decision now with respect to intervening or not intervening at some future time in Indochina. Beyond that, he inquired whether the military thought that there were any additional steps we could take to assist the French, in view of the possible new military judgment as to the disastrous effect of the loss of Dien Bien Phu.

Secretary Dulles answered that this, of course, was primarily a political matter—a loss of will to continue the struggle in Paris rather than a military defeat as such in Indochina.

With respect to Mr. Cutler's inquiry about additional steps to assist the French in the emergency, Secretary Wilson informed the Council that he had just received a request from the French for from ten to twenty B–29 aircraft together with the necessary U.S. maintenance personnel. The French, said Secretary Wilson, insist that they have the crews to keep ten of these B–29 planes in continuous operation, and had suggested that they should be based on U.S. facilities in the Philippines. The United States would, of course, be expected to supply the bombs and ammunition. At first glance, said Secretary Wilson, we in the Pentagon were inclined to regard this proposal as pretty fantastic, and we have been on the point of refusing it.

Governor Stassen observed that if one considered the alternatives it was doubtful whether the request should be rejected. These planes might actually save Dien Bien Phu. Admiral Radford, however, expressed very great doubt as to whether the French could actually make effective use of B–29's, with which they had had little experience, a view that was reinforced by General Twining. Nevertheless, replied Governor Stassen, he would throw everything we had in to help the French, short of combat forces. Admiral Radford insisted that we have done just that, but that the French could never get B–29's into operation in time to change the situation at Dien Bien Phu. Admiral Radford then went on to list the various responses we had made to French requests for assistance, and stated that this amounted to agreeing to every feasible French request. The French were, even so, unable to operate efficiently the B–26 planes already in their hands. They can only use these planes on an average of 25 hours a month, whereas we average 100 hours of use each month. The trouble was the painful inefficiency of the French. The President concurred, and said that this was little less than heartbreaking.

Governor Stassen replied that whatever might be said of the French, they were putting up a most gallant fight at Dien Bien Phu. There followed a lively exchange of views between Governor Stassen and Admiral Radford.

Mr. Cutler then proposed a Council action on the basis of the discussion to this point. Secretary Dulles commented that while Mr. Cutler's action included his own recommendation for a regional grouping, he could not fail to point out that the French and British Governments might well not be able to bring themselves to make the kind of crucial decision which was necessary. In fact, it began to look as if the United States Government alone was able to face up to these hard decisions in Asia. If this proved so, we might have to recognize that Britain and France were solely European powers. In that case it was only fair to point out that the United States would be required to make a complete reappraisal of its entire basic policy respecting the free world coalition. After temporary silence, Admiral Radford said that the command arrangements suggested in the Planning Board draft were not wholly agreeable to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had a proposed change in paragraph 8 dealing with these arrangements.

Dr. Flemming inquired as to the timing in carrying out the proposed Council action suggested by Mr. Cutler. As he understood it, the initial effort would be to work out the coalition, after which the problem would be taken up to Congress to find out their attitude toward U.S. participation. The President confirmed Dr. Flemming's statement, and said that we would take the matter before Congress after an *ad hoc* coalition had been agreed upon. We would then know where we stood and could talk to Congress. Dr. Flemming returned to the question of the timing. Would this course of action consume a matter of days, or weeks, or months? The President replied that whatever time it took, it was a matter of the highest urgency. As far as he was concerned, he was all for beginning right now. In that case, replied Dr. Flemming, he wished to refer to that portion of the Planning Board report which had indicated the importance of initiating plans for the military and mobilization measures required to meet the contingency of U.S. intervention in Indochina. Should he proceed with initiating the required planning? The President replied in the affirmative.

The Vice President informed the Council that they should not underestimate the ability of the President, the Secretary of State, and the military advisers to the Council, to induce Congress to agree to whatever measures these men thought the national interest required. Congress would do what the National Security Council felt was necessary. As an example, the Vice President cited the comparative ease with which Congress had supported the dispatch of five hundred technicians to assist the French to maintain the American planes they were using in Indochina.

The President said if that were the case, then let's commence tomorrow to ask Congress to agree to the prompt dispatch of additional technicians and maintenance crews to Indochina. We should tell Congress that if more technicians can be sent at once the whole situation may be saved. If Congress agrees, the basis will be provided for giving the French all the additional planes they could use; not the B–29's, but other planes which the French could fly.

Governor Stassen again expressed his view of doing everything for the French short of armed intervention. The President replied impatiently that we were already doing that, but let's step up our air support if Congress will agree to the dispatch of additional technicians. After a brief discussion of the tactics of the approach to Congress, the President suggested that this be done by Secretary Kyes and Admiral Radford.

Secretary Dulles suggested that Corsairs, light Navy bombers, might be offered in place of the B–29's, which idea the President thought useful. The President also raised the question of allowing the French to fly these Corsairs off of U.S. aircraft carriers. Secretary Kyes, however, pointed out that an additional French aircraft carrier was about to reach Indochina, and the President then suggested that there was no reason why U.S. technicians and maintenance personnel could not operate on board a French aircraft carrier. The President's proposal received the support of Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford.

The National Security Council: [9]

a. Noted and discussed the reference report and postponed decision on the recommendation in paragraph 7–*c* thereof,[10] but agreed that military and mobilization planning to be prepared for this contingency should be promptly initiated.

b. Agreed that the United States should direct its efforts prior to the Geneva Conference toward:

(1) Organizing a regional grouping, including initially the U.S., the U.K., France, the Associated States, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines, for the defense of Southeast Asia against Communist efforts by any means to gain control of the countries in this area.

(2) Gaining British support for U.S. objectives in the Far East, in order to strengthen U.S. policies in the area.

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[9] Points *a–d* below constituted NSC Action No. 1086, Apr. 6, 1954. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

[10] Paragraph 7–*c* of the report of Apr. 5 read as follows: "On balance, it appears that the United States should now reach a decision whether or not to intervene with combat forces, if that is necessary to save Indochina from Communist control, and, tentatively, the form and conditions of any such intervention. The timing for communication to the French of such decision, or for its implementation, should be decided in the light of future developments." (S/P–NSC files, lot 62 D 1, "Indochina")

(3) Pressing the French to accelerate the program for the independence of the Associated States.

c. Noted the President's view that, if agreement for the organization of the above-mentioned regional grouping could be achieved, Congressional authorization for U.S. participation therein should then be requested.

d. Noted the President's directive that:

(1) The Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, should urgently attempt to obtain appropriate Congressional support for increasing the number of U.S. technicians for aircraft maintenance in Indochina and for extending the period of the assignment of such technicians.

(2) Assuming such Congressional support, additional aircraft deemed capable of effective use in Indochina should be offered to the French.

Note: The action in *a* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization, for appropriate action. The action in *b* above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of State for appropriate action. The action in *d* above subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense for appropriate action.

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Editorial Note

Vice President Richard M. Nixon made the following diary note on the 192d Meeting of the National Security Council, April 6, 1954:

"The President was in a very serious mood in this meeting. Dulles presented his plan about trying to get united action among the allies. I said that such a plan was all right as far as it goes but that, if it were limited to resisting overt aggression alone, it would not meet the real future danger in Asia. I said that we must adopt the principle of uniting together to resist subversive aggression of the Indochina and Chinese Civil War type. I pointed out that we had never yet found a formula to resist this kind of aggression on a united basis.

"The President said, 'What about Korea?' I answered that Korea was a case of the Communists marching across a line even though it was technically in the same country and that, therefore, the united action principle applied because what was really involved was overt aggression.

"I also said that I didn't think the President should underestimate his ability to get the Congress and the country to follow his leadership. I suggested that more technicians could be sent to Indochina if the President asked for them. He asked Wilson to check on this immediately.

"From the conversation, however, it was quite apparent that the President had backed down considerably from the strong position he had taken on Indochina the latter part of the previous week. He seemed resigned to doing nothing at all unless we could get the allies and the country to go along with whatever was suggested and he did not seem inclined to put much pressure on to get them to come along." (*Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, page 151)

For the memorandum of discussion at this meeting, see *supra.*

Editorial Note

On April 6, 1954, the question of Indochina was the subject of debate in the United States Senate. Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts delivered an address in which he stressed that a satisfactory outcome could not be achieved unless France accorded the Associated States true independence. The following Senators participated in the discussion which followed Kennedy's speech: William F. Knowland of California (Senate Majority Leader), Henry M. Jackson of Washington, Mike Mansfield of Montana, Stuart Symington of Missouri, Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico, Warren G. Magnuson of Washington, Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois, and John C. Stennis of Mississippi. The debate indicated a growing concern in the Senate regarding the gravity of the situation, opposition to unilateral United States intervention, insistence that the President keep Congress informed, and a general belief that the successful defense of Southeast Asia was dependent upon success in winning the peoples of the area to the anti-Communist cause by insuring their independence. For the record of the debate, see the *Congressional Record*, April 6, 1954, pages 4671–4681.

751G.00/4–654 : Telegram

The Ambassador in India (Allen) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NEW DELHI, April 6, 1954—7 p. m.

1515. Repeated information Bonn 1, Karachi 218, Colombo 58, Bangkok 20, Saigon 13, Rangoon 36, Wiesbaden unnumbered. Wiesbaden for CINCUSAFE. Reference Embassy telegram 1514, April 6.[1]

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[1] In telegram 1145 to New Delhi, Apr. 4, the Department of State instructed the Embassy to seek approval for landings or overflights in connection with the proposed airlift by the U.S. Air Force of French troops from France and North Africa to Indochina. The same message was sent to seven other posts in countries on the projected flight route. (751G.00/4–454) In telegram 1510 from New Delhi, Apr. 5, Ambassador Allen reported having requested an urgent appointment with Prime Minister Nehru. N. R. Pillai, the Secretary General of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, had stated that the request could not fail to worsen U.S.-Indian relations and would certainly be refused by the Prime Minister. (751G.00/4–554) Telegram 1514 from New Delhi, Apr. 6, read as follows: "Permission to land or overfly India denied by Prime Minister Nehru. Details of conversation follow." (751G.00/4–654)

In presenting request to Prime Minister Nehru for airlift of French troops across India to Indochina, I said that judging from limited number of aircraft to be employed, number of French troops involved in transit operation was very small in comparison with masses of Vietminh forces hurled at Dien Bien Phu during last six weeks. I pointed out that Vietminh had launched heavy attacks almost immediately after his (Nehru's) call for cease-fire on February 22. In other words, at very time Nehru himself was endeavoring to obtain relaxation of fighting to create more propitious atmosphere for Geneva Conference, Vietminh had taken offensive, throwing in troops, regardless of casualties. I said we could not accept this lying down and were determined to prevent break-through which would threaten all India's eastern neighbors. I hoped he would cooperate in this effort.

Nehru acknowledged that Vietminh had taken initiative in recent fighting and indicated understanding of our reaction. At same time, he said question of transit of French troops and war materials across India had come before House several times during past three years and he had repeatedly assured House that no permission for such transit would be given. He said he could not violate this commitment. Only difference he perceived in present request was that it came from United States instead of France, but principle involved was entirely same.

I asked whether planes could overfly India without landing. He said his commitments had extended to overflights, as well as landings, and that he could not agree to either.[3]

I repeated that India would not wish to leave her eastern neighbors open to floodgates of Communist aggression and that our present effort was to restore situation to position it was when he made his cease-fire appeal. Nehru asked if I was trying to get him to change his policy. I said I was trying to consider what was in India's over-all national interests, as well as that of free world.

At this point, Nehru asked me what I thought Secretary Dulles had meant in his statement which appeared in the press today that Communist China had come very near to creating situation which would invoke all-out American response. (Indian press carried statement in box frame, headed "Mr. Dulles Talks of Invasion of China.") I pointed out that Mr. Dulles had referred to manning of anti-aircraft guns by Chinese and said I thought Mr. Dulles was giving a further warning that if Chinese fighting men, whether regular troops or so-called volunteers, entered Indochina war, widespread hostilities might result. I emphasized that responsibility rested squarely with them whether hostilities would be extended and that we could not be blamed for not having warned them in advance.

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[3] The airlift as conducted later in April avoided Indian territory. For additional information on the operation, see editorial note, p. 1357.

Comment: Conversation was serious, but courteous throughout and there was no tendency on Nehru's part to engage in polemics.[3]

ALLEN

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[3] Telegram 1162 to New Delhi, Apr. 7, read as follows: "Department most pleased at points made by you in your talk with Nehru." (751G.00/4–654)

751G.00/4–554 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

TOP SECRET NIACT WASHINGTON, April 6, 1954—7:12 p. m.

3512. Eyes only Ambassador from Secretary. Your 3729.[2] If you think appropriate advise Bidault orally and personally from me as follows:

> "My friend, I know that you and Laniel are subject to great burdens. I have done and am doing all properly in my power to bring reinforcements to the situation.
>
> "The US has met with almost miraculous speed and efficiency every emergency request that the French have made up to the point of our assuming the role of an active belligerent. It can hardly be expected that this momentous decision could be taken without preparation when our nation is not itself directly attacked. There must be adequate public understanding and Congressional support and action and international preparation. Congressional action is problematic unless other nations in the area more directly and immediately interested than we show that they share our judgment of the danger and are also willing to act with us to meet it. We deeply regret that this political exploration will cause some delay.
>
> "Our military advisers see no reason why the fate of all of Indochina should be decided in ten days at Dien Bien Phu since this battle must be greatly exhausting the military potential of the enemy. It would seem that they are making a reckless military gamble in the hope of psychological results which will achieve political success. There seems to be no material reason why this political success need be given them, particularly if the free nations of the area unite to deny it.
>
> "The gallant effort being made by the French is already not without results as there is growing recognition of the great burden France is carrying and the courage which her sons are showing and an increasing disposition to stand together even more closely. I extend my warm regard and respect. Foster Dulles"

For Ambassador's Information Only

In reference to your 3738[3] latest French request was considered at emergency meeting of NSC this afternoon. The military felt that B-29's were impractical, and we felt that to base planes on the Philippines would involve them in hostilities and was unacceptable to us. However these were tentative reactions and matter is still under study. Believe military may recommend alternative offer of light planes which can be flown off French carrier. Hope have firm decision by tomorrow. You can tell Bidault we are giving this request our urgent study and expect answer soonest.

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[1] Drafted by the Secretary of State.
[2] Dated Apr. 5, p. 1243.
[3] Dated Apr. 6, p. 1248.

Dulles

Ridgway papers

Memorandum by the Chief of Staff, United States Army (Ridgway) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff

SECRET [Washington,] 6 April 1954.

Subject: Indo-China.

1. Currently approved United States Government objectives would regard:

a. The passing of the countries of southeast Asia into the Communist orbit as of grave concern to the United States, and

b. The loss of Indo-China to the Communist orbit as leading to the loss of the other countries of southeast Asia to the Communist orbit.

2. The attainment of the United States objective of keeping Indo-China out of the Communist orbit is, therefore, of grave concern to the United States and to the free world.

3. The problem now confronting the United States and the free world is how to attain this objective.

4. The JCS have a responsibility for stating the military measures which in their opinion it would be necessary to take to attain the foregoing objective.

5. Such military measures should be on as broad a multi-national basis as possible. Only under the most extreme circumstances, if at all, should the United States take such military measures alone.

6. Moreover, while the retention of Indo-China on the side of the free world is a major objective, it does not follow that the military measures required to attain that objective would find any decisive objectives in Indo-China itself.

7. The immediate and major source of Viet Minh military power is Communist China. With that source destroyed or neutralized, the Viet Minh would cease to present a major military problem to the French in Indo-China.

8. It therefore follows that consideration of the military measures required for the attainment of the objectives stated should go far beyond consideration of mere intervention by armed forces, both United States and allied, in Indo-China. Such use of United States armed forces, apart from any local successes they might achieve, would constitute a dangerous strategic diversion of limited United States military capabilities, and would commit our armed forces in a non-decisive theatre to the attainment of non-decisive local objectives. The greater the United States military forces so employed, the greater would be the advantage to the true sources of Communist military power—Communist China and the USSR. I can see no adequate military justification for such action, nor for the greatly increased risks of general war so incurred.

9. On the contrary, if the United States Government should determine the existence of a situation in which the loss of Indo-China and in turn the rest of southeast Asia to the Communist orbit requires the use of allied armed forces, including our own, in order to avoid such loss, then I would conclude that:

a. The United States Government, with the concurrence and support of as many of its Allies as it can obtain, should inform Communist China and the world of its intentions to employ its armed forces to destroy or to neutralize the sources of Viet Minh military power, unless Communist China halts military aid to the Viet Minh.

b. The United States enlist fullest possible military support of its Allies.

c. Initiate mobilization and supporting actions, unless the response of Communist China is thoroughly satisfactory.

10. I recommend that these views be noted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the accompanying memorandum[1] forwarded to the Secretary of Defense.

M. B. RIDGWAY
General, United States Army

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[1] The accompanying memorandum is not attached to the source text and has not been identified.

711.5611/4–954

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] April 7, 1954.

Captain George Anderson (Special Assistant to Admiral Radford) asked to see me this morning on a "delicate matter". He gave me the following information on a most confidential basis, which he said Admiral Radford wished conveyed to Secretary Dulles:

The "advance study group"[1] in the Pentagon has been making an estimate of whether atomic weapons could be used to clean up the Vietminh in the Dien Bien Phu area. It has reached the conclusion that three tactical A-weapons, properly employed, would be sufficient to smash the Vietminh effort there.[2]

This study in turn raised in Admiral Radford's mind the question of whether in the event of establishment of a coalition in Southeast Asia, in which the US participates and commits forces, we could use atomic weapons on the Vietminh if this seemed the best means of smashing them and cleaning up Indochina.

In the event we are successful in forming a coalition in Southeast Asia, Admiral Radford wondered whether we could not go to the French and get their approval for using atomic weapons in Indochina if this became necessary when the coalition was participating in operations. His feeling was that if we could get French acceptance of the principle of the use of such weapons, the whole conception of gaining acceptance of their use would be assisted. Furthermore, if we got French approval in principle after the coalition was formed but before we actively committed forces to Indochina, we could later use such weapons when our forces (air) were engaged.

Admiral Radford had discussed this briefly with Secretary Wilson, who said Admiral Radford should lay the matter before Secretary Dulles and seek his views.

Captain Anderson on a personal basis asked me if I had any reactions and I said that it raised in my mind very serious questions affecting the whole position of US leadership in the world. My own frank guess would be that the French Government would not agree or accept the responsibility for using an A-bomb. Furthermore, if we approached the French, the story would certainly leak and become public knowledge. The fact that we were considering such steps in Indochina would in turn cause a great hue and cry throughout the parliaments of the free world, and particularly among some of our NATO allies, notably the UK. This in turn might result in parliamentary pressures on governments to seek assurances from us that we would not use A-weapons without consultation, particularly in those countries that were joined with us and had forces contributed to collective defense arrangements such as NATO. Furthermore, in addition to the Soviet propaganda, many elements in the free world would portray our desire to use such weapons in Indochina as proof of the fact that we were testing out weapons on native peoples and were in fact prepared to act irresponsibly and drop weapons of mass destruction on the Soviet Union whenever we believed it was necessary to do so. The state of mind in the UK, at least, on this general subject had been demonstrated in the parliamentary debate of last Monday. Finally, I said that if there were collective effort in Indochina and the Chinese Communists then intervened overtly, that would be a different matter, but the proposition which was in Admiral Radford's mind to use these weapons in Indochina itself obviously raised questions which the Secretary would have to consider and inform Admiral Radford of his views. I emphasized, of course, that the above reactions were purely my own personal reactions to the proposition.

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[1] Reference is to the Joint Advanced Study Committee, Joint Chiefs of Staff. The records of the Committee have not been found.

[2] In his memoirs, Richard Nixon writes the following: "In Washington the Joint Chiefs of Staff, under their Chairman, Adm. Arthur Radford, devised a plan, known as Operation Vulture, for using three small tactical atomic bombs to destroy Vietminh positions and relieve the garrison. Both Eisenhower and Dulles, however, felt that nothing less than overt Chinese Communist aggression would be sufficient provocation for our going into Vietnam in any such a direct and unilateral way." (*Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, p. 150)

It was left that when the Secretary could see Admiral Radford he would let him know.[3]

Because of the sensitivity of this matter, I made only this original of this memo and one copy (which is in the hands of S/S). I have asked that the copy in S/S be shown to the Under Secretary, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Merchant, Mr. Bowie, and Mr. Robertson on a hand-carry eyes only basis.[4]

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR II

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[3] The source text is accompanied by an undated handwritten note by O'Connor of S/S to MacArthur which read as follows: "Sec did not want to raise this now with Adm R—& the latter I gather did not raise it with the Sec." The source text is attached to a memorandum for the file by MacArthur dated Apr. 9, which read as follows: "I called Captain George Anderson (Special Assistant to Admiral Radford). I said I was leaving with Secretary Dulles for Europe tomorrow and wanted him to know I had passed on to the Secretary the information Captain Anderson had given me (see attached memorandum). I said that the Secretary had said an opportunity to talk to Admiral Radford about this would undoubtedly occur some time and I thought we could leave it to the two of them to get together when appropriate."

[4] Chits accompanying the source text indicate that a copy was transmitted to Under Secretary Smith on Apr. 7 and had been seen by Murphy, Merchant, Bowie, and Robertson by May 5.

751G.00/4–754 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 7, 1954—11 a. m.

3756. Limit distribution. As Bidault had asked to be informed personally at any time during the night if a definite reply was received to request in my 3738,[1] I saw him first thing this morning and gave him Secretary's message contained in Deptel 3512,[2] as well as information that definite answer on my 3738 could be hoped for later today.

He then stressed to me that Navarre expected a renewed attack on Dien-Bien-Phu between middle and end of this week and that any additional help, to be fully effective, should be in place and in use before end of week.

(*Comment:* If US military should decide on alternative offer of lighter type planes, I believe it important that these planes start moving immediately toward Indochina without waiting for formal acceptance of offer by French).

Bidault then commented on paragraphs 2 and 3 of Secretary's message and said that he could well understand necessity for congressional support and need to interest other nations in joint action in order to assure congressional support. He said, however, that Dien-Bien-Phu had become a symbol of war to Vietnamese, to Navarre personally, and to French people here. If Dien-Bien-Phu should fall he felt that it would be an irreparable blow to Vietnamese morale and probably also to Navarre's morale and to French public opinion. In that event it would be most unlikely that either Associated States or France would be willing to continue war even with full American military support. Bidault said that personally he would do his best to prevent a French withdrawal and that he would personally never negotiate with Ho-Chi-Minh. He said that we must realize, however, that his personal views on subject were not typical of French public opinion or of government as a whole.

He then said that Navarre was becoming nervous and overtired because basis of all his planning had been upset by arrival in Indochina of Chinese men and material from Korea. This had upset and discouraged him almost to point of defeatism.

(*Comment:* This information regarding Navarre must be held in absolute confidence.)

In view of above, it seems clear that if Dien-Bien-Phu should fall we run grave risk of losing French and possible Vietnamese support for any future action which we might envisage taking in Indochina area.

DILLON

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[1] Dated Apr. 6, p. 1248.
[2] Dated Apr. 6, p. 1268.

751G.00/4–754 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 7, 1954—1:28 p. m.
PRIORITY

3520. Eyes only Ambassador. Reference Deptel 3512[2] containing my personal message to Bidault. We are examining with Defense feasibility and implications of request for B–29's reported your 3738[3] with same seriousness and rapidity with which highest officials of our government are attending to every French request. You will of course appreciate that apart from technical factors this request contains serious implications for Philippine government.

I think you should know however I am deeply disturbed by character of these latest requests from French as well as by their tone. Not only do they seem to have been hastily advanced without having been thought through as to their military or political feasibility but there are overtones which suggest French may be preparing to place upon us responsibility if Dien Bien Phu should fall which are all too reminiscent of desperate and indeed hysterical appeals which Reynaud addressed to US in June 1940. I think you should tell Bidault that while we do not for a moment minimize seriousness of military situation and while it will continue to be our aim to do everything possible to help in these critical days we find it difficult to reconcile our decision, taken within twelve hours of its receipt, to airlift two battalions from North Africa to Indo-China with the word which we now have that first battalion will not be ready to move until April 20 and second not until May.

Finally, Bidault's reaction as reported in your 3729[4] to serious and far-reaching suggestion for a coalition is even more disturbing. It involves in essence a proposal that US should become a war ally even though not itself directly involved or threatened. Responsible persons do not treat such momentous proposals as reported. I sincerely trust that it was merely preliminary and hasty reflex of a deeply harassed man. If his first reaction becomes fixed, it will appear to us here as a loss of perspective and understanding on his part which however understandable in light of pressures he is enduring hardly reflects a frame of mind conducive effective collaboration between our two governments in this difficult period. All your efforts and ours must be directed toward restoring to Bidault and other French leaders a sense of perspective which the times require as well as to instill in them courage and poise to move boldly and rapidly on a broad front to maintain cause of freedom in Asia with which position of France as world power is inextricably bound.

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[1] Drafted by Bonbright and MacArthur.
[2] Dated Apr. 6, p. 1268.
[3] Dated Apr. 6, p. 1248.
[4] Dated Apr. 5, p. 1243.

DULLES

751G.00/4–754

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Bonbright)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 7, 1954.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: The Canadian Ambassador
The Secretary
EUR—Mr. Bonbright

The Secretary began the conversation by stating that he understood the Ambassador had seen Mr. MacArthur[1] and that in the circumstances it would probably not be necessary for him to cover the entire ground, but that he would be glad to answer any questions. He said he realized that Canada, like us, was a Pacific as well as an Atlantic power and he thought that the economic measures recently taken by Canada with respect to Japan were constructive. The immediate problem in Southeast Asia was perhaps a little further away but he could see that it was of considerable interest to Canada because of its potential effects on Japan. He feared that the loss of Southeast Asia would have serious repercussions on Japan in view of the importance of that country as a market and source of raw materials. Our further fear was that the whole situation would slip at Geneva unless there was unity and determination on the part of the Governments with immediate interests in the area.

In response to a question from Ambassador Heeney concerning the relationship of Burma and Indonesia to our proposal, the Secretary replied that he expects to see the Indonesian Ambassador in the next twenty-four hours in order to fill him in. He had not planned to see the Burmese Ambassador but he thought that perhaps as a matter of courtesy he should do so. He hardly dared hope that these Governments would formally associate themselves with the enterprise but thought that they should be given the opportunity.

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[1] Ambassador Heeney discussed Indochina with MacArthur on the morning of Apr. 6. The memorandum of that conversation indicates that MacArthur told the Ambassador that there appeared to be no basis for a satisfactory negotiated settlement at the Geneva Conference. In view of French fatigue, the United States feared that if some new element were not injected into the situation before the conference, the temptation of France to let Indochina go by the board might be overpowering. This, said the Counselor, was what the Secretary had in mind in his recent appeal for "united action." MacArthur expressed the hope that Canada would support steps to prevent Southeast Asia from falling into Communist hands. (751G.00/4–754)

The Ambassador indicated that Mr. MacArthur had not felt free to disclose to him the precise character of our proposal and wondered if the Secretary felt he was in a position to do so. The Secretary replied that we were suggesting, subject of course to counter suggestions, an *ad hoc* political association somewhat along the lines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization but limited in purpose. We were not attempting to set up a new permanent organization. Our thought was that this association should be based on a determination on the part of parties concerned to prevent the spread of the Soviet and Chinese Communist system to Southeast Asia. The members should be prepared if necessary to take military action, primarily in support of the French effort, the extent of the military action to be worked out later by a military committee which might be established. He believed that military activity in Indochina would substantially decrease by the end of May when the rainy season begins, but he did not discount the possibility that Viet Minh would endeavor to keep up the pressure, particularly in view of the Geneva Conference. However, there was less likelihood of a major military change during the rainy season and we do not think it likely that a disaster will occur between now and the arrival of the rains. The difficulty was with the situation in France and we feared that the French might collapse and seek peace at any price at Geneva. Our hope is that this can be delayed and prevented. In our view, even if Dien Bien Phu falls this should not, militarily speaking, destroy the French effort since only 5 to 6 per cent of their total forces (although an admittedly higher proportion in terms of quality) are engaged in the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Moreover, the French have engaged and mauled the major military formations of the enemy. A serious Viet Minh military effort prior to Geneva had been expected and the Secretary had forecast this to M. Bidault at Berlin. In view of the bad situation in Paris we had felt that a new element in the situation was required to support the French effort. This new element would be even more necessary if Indochina is lost. We also anticipate that ANZUS will be called upon to play a more active role in the future.

The Ambassador then asked for clarification on the factors which would bring this new united action into play and whether it was designed to meet the situation as it is at present or some new action on the part of the Communists. The Secretary indicated that it was the present situation which called for the new initiative. If the coalition is created we will try to get Congress to grant discretional authority to the President to use military force in support of the French effort and in association with others. If there should be open intervention on the part of Chinese Red armies we would expect to take such measures as knocking out Chinese air bases, the interdiction of supplies on roads, trails, etc. leading into Indochina and probably the stepping up of activities along the South China coast. Any idea that we were considering some such thing as dropping an H-bomb on Peiping was, of course, fantastic.

The Secretary then stated that we had been giving massive aid to the French, both in money and matériel, and this aid was being given with the utmost speed. The French had recently asked us to intervene in terms which would have involved our belligerency. We were not disposed to take such steps except as part of a collective operation. The danger to the United States was great but it was less than the danger to Malaya, New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines. The United States people and Congress feel that if these countries are not moved by the danger we should not be moved. Consequently, a condition precedent to U.S. participation is evidence that others are worried and are willing to act with us. The Secretary wanted to make it clear that we were not trying to prevent the reaching of agreement at Geneva; on the contrary, we were endeavoring to increase our collective strength so as to make possible the saving of Indochina. He then referred briefly to the analogy between the situation today and that of 1932 when we endeavored to get the British to join with us in stopping the Japanese in Manchuria. The British had not responded, largely on the grounds that they lacked our support in Europe. This certainly was not true today.

The Ambassador then stated that Pearson was extremely interested in this situation and had been questioned about it yesterday in the External Affairs Committee of the Parliament, particularly with respect to what were Canada's commitments in the Far East. Mr. Pearson had answered these inquiries by indicating that Canada's commitments were closely tied to the United Nations' and for this reason Mr. Heeney believed that this aspect of the problem had particular significance for Canada. The Secretary stated that he hoped to get the French to agree to withdraw their opposition to placing the matter before the UN. He had tried to do this last year without success. In any event, we felt that the matter should be brought to the attention of the UN where we would explain our position and there would be an opportunity to make it a UN affair if that was desired. We could not ignore the UN and even if we wanted to, others would raise the question. However, we should recognize that we would be faced there with a Soviet veto in the first instance, and it was at least uncertain that we could get quick and satisfactory action in the UN. He thought we could base our action on Article 51 of the Charter and perhaps ask that the Uniting for Peace Resolution be invoked. He himself would like to see a peace observation commission sent to Indochina.

The Ambassador then indicated that the next question to which the Canadians attach great importance is the question of independence for the Associated States. The Secretary agreed and said we must insist on this with the French. The people of this country would not take action which would have the effect of bolstering the French colonial position in Indochina. In our view the purpose of the war was independence. We have charged the Viet Minh and Chinese with trying to subvert nationalistic feeling for their own purposes. In spite of French fears about taking the matter to the UN, which we recognize have been at least partly based in the past on the effects of such a move on the French position in North Africa, we believe these fears will tend to disappear if we can get the French to give stronger and clearer commitments on the independence question.

The Ambassador then asked if the reactions which we had received from the countries consulted were encouraging. The Secretary replied that as yet we really had no firm reactions. The United Kingdom Cabinet was understood to be discussing the matter today. The initial personal reactions of the Ambassador of New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines had been sympathetic but these were not governmental views. A flash reaction from M. Bidault was unfavorable in that Bidault seemed to feel that unless the battle of Dien Bien Phu is won, all is lost. The Secretary stressed that this again was purely a preliminary reaction on the part of the French, but he was wondering if anyone in Paris was in a position today to give a meaningful answer in view of the division in the Cabinet, parliamentary difficulties, the Indochina situation, EDC, the Saar and, lastly, the trouble with Marshal Juin.[2] It was the Secretary's personal belief that there would probably have to be high-level talks in London and Paris before we can get a final action.

Ambassador Heeney said he understood that it was our hope to have the coalition in being prior to Geneva. The Secretary agreed that at least it should be in the process of formation when the conference convenes. The new association should be accepted in principle by then or Indochina would be lost in Geneva.

The Secretary concluded by saying that he would be interested in Mr. Pearson's reactions and that he was looking forward to seeing him in Paris.

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[2] On Apr. 1 Marshal Juin was divested of his functions as permanent military adviser to the French Government and as military vice-president of the Superior Council of the French Armed Forces following his public criticism of the additional protocols of the proposed European Defense Treaty.

790.00/4-754

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) [1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 7, 1954.

Subject: United Action in Southeast Asia

Participants: The Ambassador of Viet-Nam [2]
The Ambassador of Cambodia [3]
The Minister of Laos [4]
The Secretary
Mr. Robertson
Mr. Bonsal
Mr. Tyler

The Ambassadors of Viet-Nam and Cambodia and the Minister of Laos called on the Secretary at their request.

The Secretary told them that as they knew world attention is focused on the situation in Indochina and particularly on the siege of Dien Bien Phu, the gallant French and Vietnamese defenders of which have attracted universal admiration. The Secretary referred also to his own recent statements regarding the importance of Indochina to the free world.

The Secretary then went on to say that the French have now approached the US with a view to having the latter increase its cooperation and to participate in a more direct form in the struggle. The Secretary stated that the US was willing to do this on condition first, that whatever additional effort is made to insure the security of Indochina be made as a common effort by a large number of interested states including for example, France, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines. In reply to a question from the Cambodian Ambassador, the Secretary made it clear that he would expect the Cambodians, Vietnamese and Laotians to participate in the political aspects of such a coalition on exactly the same basis as the other participants.

The Secretary stated that a second condition for US participation directly in Indochina would be the establishment of the independence of the Associated States in a manner reflecting their complete sovereignty and independence. The Secretary stated that in his opinion the French Union offered a suitable framework for that independence and for the recognition of the mutuality of interests involved under present circumstances. He said, however, that the three states of Indochina should be free to determine for themselves whether they would continue to adhere to the French Union. This expression was received with obvious gratification by the Ambassadors. The Cambodian Ambassador stated that he would hope that such a statement might be made publicly by the United States. The Secretary reserved his position on this point.

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[1] This memorandum of conversation was summarized in telegram 1890 to Saigon, Apr. 8, repeated to Paris and London for information. (751G.00/4-854)

[2] Tran Van Kha.

[3] Nong Kimny.

[4] Ourot Souvannavong.

The Secretary made clear that he was referring not only to a possible future overt Chinese Communist aggression but also to measures which might be necessary in order to prevent the present Chinese Communist supported Viet Minh uprising from being successful and from imposing a Communist Government upon the entire area.

A question was raised by the Cambodian Ambassador regarding participation in the Geneva Conference. The Secretary confirmed that the matter of participation in the Indochina aspect of the conference is still unsettled. He agreed, however, with the Cambodian Ambassador that if Viet-Nam, Cambodia and Laos should be invited, they should be invited as full members rather than as observers or as participants with any different status from that of the "other interested states".

The Cambodian Ambassador also raised the possibility that United States military assistance (presumably end items) could be made available directly to Cambodia instead of through the French as at present. The Secretary replied that this raised a number of considerations which he was not prepared to discuss at this time. He asked whether the Cambodians had raised this matter formally; the reply was in the negative.

The Secretary asked the representatives of Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia to secure the views of their Governments regarding the statement of the US position which he had made, stressing the desirability of creating a maximum of political solidarity prior to the Geneva meeting.

Editorial Note

Asked at his news conference of April 7, 1954, to comment on the strategic importance of Indochina to the free world, President Eisenhower responded as follows:

> "You have, of course, both the specific and the general when you talk about such things.
>
> "First of all, you have the specific value of a locality in its production of materials that the world needs.
>
> "Then you have the possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is inimical to the free world.

"Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the 'falling domino' principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.

"Now, with respect to the first one, two of the items from this particular area that the world uses are tin and tungsten. They are very important. There are others, of course, the rubber plantations and so on.

"Then with respect to more people passing under this domination, Asia, after all, has already lost some 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship, and we simply can't afford greater losses.

"But when we come to the possible sequence of events, the loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following, now you begin to talk about areas that not only multiply the disadvantages that you would suffer through loss of materials, sources of materials, but now you are talking really about millions and millions and millions of people.

"Finally, the geographical position achieved thereby does many things. It turns the so-called island defensive chain of Japan, Formosa, of the Philippines and to the southward; it moves in to threaten Australia and New Zealand.

"It takes away, in its economic aspects, that region that Japan must have as a trading area or Japan, in turn, will have only one place in the world to go—that is, toward the Communist areas in order to live.

"So, the possible consequences of the loss are just incalculable to the free world."

In response to other questions presented during the course of the news conference, the President made the following points. The United States had not yet received any positive responses to its request for united action. He was not certain whether the Indochina situation should be brought before the United Nations, but "this is the kind of thing that must not be handled by one nation trying to act alone." He refused to speculate on action by the United States in the event of open aggression by Communist China in Indochina. He said that statements made by Secretary Dulles on the situation were always carefully considered by the President in advance. He commented that the chances for achieving a satisfactory negotiated settlement at the Geneva Conference were not good. He said that the administration did not desire any specific action by Congress at the present time with regard to Indochina. Finally, he refused to comment on whether the United States was prepared, as a last resort, to "go it alone" in Indochina.

For the record of the news conference of April 7, 1954, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, pages 381–390.

751G.00/4–754: Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PARIS, April 7, 1954—7 p. m.

3774. Limit distribution. Reference Embassy telegram 3710, April 5, penultimate paragraph. Maurice Schumann told me this afternoon French Government would, in principle, give favorable response to Secretary's proposal. However, it was quite apparent that he and Bidault are completely absorbed with immediate Dien Bien Phu battle to exclusion of everything else.

As indicative of the French thinking, Chauvel[1] earlier today gave me a copy of a memorandum[2] he had prepared for Bidault's use at Ministerial meeting this morning. Bidault had authorized him to pass it on to me, though it did not necessarily represent Bidault's final position.

Memorandum, which deals primarily with Secretary's proposal, points out that this subject must be separated from such urgent measures as are necessary to assist in the defense of Dien Bien Phu. It then goes on to say that it is hardly likely that the Secretary's plan can be completed and put into operation in the 19 days remaining before Geneva. It points out that French public opinion expects a sincere effort to reach a peaceful arrangement at Geneva, and that negotiations leading up to the creation of the coalition envisaged in the Secretary's plan might very well be construed in France as a deliberate effort to torpedo the Geneva Conference. The memorandum goes on to say that the one risk the French Government can not take is that of letting the French public believe that the United States Government is trying to prevent France from ending the war in Indochina. It cites need to distinguish between: (1) emergency assistance for Dien Bien Phu, (2) preparation for Geneva, which means "study of solutions appropriate to assure cessation of hostilities with necessary military and political safeguards", and (3) study by French, United States and United Kingdom Governments of Secretary's plan. It concludes by saying the Secretary's plan should be pursued in such a way that it can be put into effect immediately, provided the effort to arrive at a peaceful solution in Geneva should fail. The memorandum also states that the very helpful speech recently delivered by the Secretary is sufficient warning for Chinese so that they will have to listen seriously to whatever is proposed at Geneva.

Chauvel added orally that French were very skeptical as to what action, if any, the British would take to help. He also pointed out that

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[1] Jean Chauvel, French Ambassador in Switzerland; member of the French Delegation to the Geneva Conference.

[2] Not found in Department of State files.

Indochina question is one which has deep emotional appeal to all Frenchmen at this time and that, therefore, it is most important that public opinion here should feel that United States is sympathetic to French position.

Comment: We here must agree that Indochina problem presently centered in Dien Bien Phu has a far broader base emotionally throughout France than European problems, such as EDC. We feel this should be kept in mind by Department at all times. Chauvel's paper, however, completely misses point that implementation of Secretary's proposal before Geneva would greatly increase possibilities of finding satisfactory solution there.

DILLON

751G.00/4-654 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy at Saigon[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, April 7, 1954—7:25 p. m.

1877. Saigon's 1914 repeated Paris 620.[2] Information given by Secretary April 5 to House Foreign Affairs Committee reflected following information given Ambassador Dillon by Laniel and Bidault April 4:[3]

> "First. Fourteen technical advisors at Giap headquarters plus numerous others at division level. All under command of Chinese Communist General Ly Chen-hou who is stationed at Giap headquarters.
>
> "Second. Special telephone lines installed, maintained and operated by Chinese personnel.
>
> "Third. Forty 37 mm. anti-aircraft guns radar-controlled at Dien Bien Phu. These guns operated by Chinese and evidently are from Korea. These AA guns are now shooting through clouds to bring down French aircraft.
>
> "Fourth. One thousand supply trucks of which 500 have arrived since 1 March, all driven by Chinese army personnel.
>
> "Fifth. Substantial material help in guns, shells, etc., as is well known."

Neither Department nor Defense have received this material from any other source in such detailed form although presence Chinese on advisory technical levels has been frequently reported. Instead of "no comment" it is suggested that USIA and others reply to press and other inquiries that Secretary's information based on French sources which we have every reason to believe reliable.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Also sent to Paris as telegram 3530.

[2] Telegram 1914 from Saigon, Apr. 6, not printed, reported on allegations appearing in the local press concerning testimony by Secretary Dulles before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Apr. 5. The Secretary was quoted as saying that the Chinese Communist role in Indochina "terribly resembles direct intervention." The Embassy reported that the immediate reaction among the French in Saigon and among many Vietnamese might be that the United States was preparing to enter into war with Communist China and to involve them as involuntary allies. (751G.00/4-654) For the public portion of Dulles' testimony of Apr. 5, see *The Mutual Security Act of 1954: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives* (83d Cong., 2d sess.), pp. 1–25.

[3] See telegram 3710 from Paris, Apr. 5, p. 1236.

Secretary specifically said that these reported Chinese actions came "awfully close" to the type of overt aggression referred to in his earlier statements but he did not state that the boundary into overt aggression had in fact been crossed. Purpose of statement among others was to indicate to Chinese Communists that they are getting perilously close to point of serious risk to themselves.

DULLES

751G.00/4–754 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in New Zealand[1]

TOP SECRET NIACT WASHINGTON, April 7, 1954—8:07 p. m.

134. For Ambassador. Limited distribution. Following is summary of memo of conversation not cleared yet by Secretary of Munro's call on him yesterday.[2] Munro began discussion with expression his surprise over strong feeling in New Zealand for action by UN.

Secretary replied we had no intention bypass UN which would be taken fully into account. He thought coalition should take initiative in bringing matter to attention UN. But we should not allow expression our joint determination to oppose expansion Communist power Southeast Asia to depend on prior resolution of UN as UN action would be long drawnout with probable Soviet Security Council veto and lengthy debates in Assembly. In Assembly following such debates might be possible obtain two-third vote of support provided we can persuade that body coalition engaged on "crusade" and not a colonial operation. Secretary thought first phase should be formation coalition after which question of reference to UN would be part of an operating second phase on which we should all consult with respect to timing, etc.

Munro then inquired as to attitude of French stating his Government felt appropriate that French should request formation of coalition.

Secretary indicated we do not yet have definite views of French but that among sporadic requests for assistance received from French, at least one was of character which would involve our belligerency. We are not prepared to be sucked into war gradually in such a manner and we would not enter such an operation if others with vital interests in the area were not committed.

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[1] Drafted by Raynor of BNA. Repeated for information to Canberra as telegram 169.

[2] A memorandum of the conversation between Dulles and Munro of Apr. 6, by Bonbright of EUR, is in PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina".

Munro stated he personally did not view arrangement as attractive if French were to control all resources of coalition and doubted if that would appeal to his Government.

Secretary expressed concurrence this view.

Munro then stressed importance fullest possible agreement between US and UK as basic to policy his Government. Secretary expressed appreciation this point and understood matter will be discussed within next forty-eight hours by British Cabinet.

Munro then indicated his Government encouraged by Radford's statement Sunday that we anticipated military participation would be limited to Naval and Air support but raised question whether as in case of Korea this might not be followed speedily by introduction land forces. Secretary indicated he could not add to or subtract from Radford's statement. It is not possible this type of case to impose absolute limitations but our basic policy is that it would not be profitable to wage war in Asia by use of land forces. He doubted if any one could give categoric assurances this matter.

Munro then observed he understood coalition would not include South Korea and Nationalist China. Secretary confirmed this understanding but stressed importance of inclusion to Philippines and Thailand.

The Secretary closed the conversation by stating that if the soundings we are taking indicate that neither the UK nor France is in a position to make hard decisions and will only let nature take its course, this would lead to distress and worry for all of us. He felt that both New Zealand and Australia could assist greatly with the UK if they were so disposed.

For Embassy Canberra. Assume your 213, April 7 crossed Deptel 163, April 6 repeated to Wellington as Deptel 133.[3] Please repeat your 163 to Wellington.

DULLES

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[3] Telegram 213 from Canberra, Apr. 7, concerning the question of united action, is not printed. (396.1 GE/4–754) Regarding telegram 163 to Canberra, see footnote 1, p. 1231.

751G.00/4–754 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 7, 1954—8:25 p. m.

3534. Your 3738.[2] Limit distribution. Request was examined at the highest level on April 6 and as a result General Valluy was informed by Admiral Radford on April 7 along the following lines: 1) Length of necessary flight training for French crews would appear to prevent use of B–29s during current emergency. 2) Defense believed additional B–26s, based in Viet Nam would be preferable B–29s based a considerable distance away. We are prepared to supply additional B–26s according to the French ability to fly them. We offered 25 Corsair fighter bombers and they are now being sent. 3) Negotiations with the Philippines to permit the suggested basing of bombers there to operate against the Viet Minh would take too much time in view of the urgency of the situation.

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[1] Drafted by Hoey of PSA.

[2] Dated Apr. 6, p. 1248.

General Norstad who was in Washington during the last few days is informed of and approves above decisions. He has returned to Paris where he will be seeing Pleven and will be able bring you up to date on this matter.[3]

You may wish to inform Bidault of above, including reference to Valluy's having been informed directly by Radford.[4]

DULLES

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[3] In a memorandum of Apr. 7, addressed to the Secretary, the Under Secretary, Murphy, Robertson, Merchant, and Bowie, MacArthur described the status of negotiations between United States and French military authorities regarding increased U.S. support for the French air force in Indochina. (751G.00/4–754)

[4] Ambassador Dillon reported in telegram 3777 from Paris, Apr. 8, that he had informed Bidault of the contents of this telegram. The Foreign Minister had expressed his appreciation for the prompt action of the U.S. Government. (751G.5 MSP/4–854)

790.5/4–754 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET NIACT WASHINGTON, April 7, 1954—8:25 p.m.

3535. Eyes only Ambassador Dillon from Secretary, Aldrich for info. Deptels 3476 and 3478 rptd London 5175 and 5177.[2] FYI and for background, reftels summarize my meetings with Makins and Bonnet re formation coalition of nations in Southeast Asia to prevent that area from falling into Communist hands. On April 4 President sent message to Churchill indicating tremendous importance we attach to formation such coalition with our reasons. He concluded his message by indicating that so vitally important are the stakes that he was prepared to send me or Bedell Smith to London at earliest date this week convenient to Churchill. He added that whoever came would also spend day in Paris to talk with French and that cover for trip would be preparation for Geneva. Churchill today replied to President[3] that UK Cabinet has discussed our proposal and he would be glad for me to come to London next Monday[4] to talk about Southeast Asia coalition. You should know Eden in supplementary message raised question of inviting Bidault to London to make affair tripartite.[5]

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[1] Drafted by the Secretary of State, MacArthur, and Merchant. Repeated to London as telegram 5252.

[2] See footnote 1, p. 1225, and footnote 1, p. 1214.

I recognize that instead of my visiting London and Paris the French may also suggest tripartite meeting as alternative. This would not be satisfactory as I must have opportunity to discuss French situation with Churchill and Eden very frankly. Also I believe possibility of getting French and British to move in right direction is greater if we see them separately. I believe we will have to ride out damage to French sensibilities which may not be all net disadvantage in connection with EDC. I plan to arrive London evening April 11 and would remain there until afternoon April 13 when I would proceed to Paris if this were convenient and did not raise any problems for Laniel and Bidault. End FYI and background.

With above in mind, you should see Bidault and convey to him following verbal message:

Begin message. In my talk with Ambassador Bonnet on April 3 I outlined to him in detail our views on situation in Indochina and Southeast Asia and our firm belief that threat of Communist domination in that area should be met by united action on part of those govts and peoples whose security is directly concerned. I also informed Ambassador Bonnet that I was explaining our views along same lines to British Ambassador.

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[3] Prime Minister Churchill's reply of Apr. 7 has not been found. In *Mandate for Change*, p. 347, Eisenhower states that the message was "to the effect that his government would talk over the matter with Foster in London on April 12." Eisenhower adds that "his brief message showed that the British had little enthusiasm for joining us in taking a firm position."

[4] Apr. 12.

[5] The message from Foreign Secretary Eden was delivered orally to Secretary Dulles by Makins on Apr. 7. MacArthur's memorandum of their conversation read in part as follows:

"Sir Roger Makins called on the Secretary this afternoon to convey a message from Mr. Eden regarding the Secretary's prospective trip to London. Sir Roger said that on the assumption the Secretary would accept the invitation to begin talks in London on April 12, Mr. Eden wished to convey to him the following: 1) Mr. Eden was eagerly looking forward to seeing the Secretary and talking over a number of matters of mutual interest; 2) Mr. Eden wished to know the Secretary's views on how the French should be handled in connection with the Secretary's trip. Specifically, Mr. Eden suggested that consideration might be given to asking M. Bidault to come to London and have tripartite talks.

"The Secretary replied that he did not think tripartite talks at this particular juncture were desirable. He said he wished to talk very frankly to Sir Winston and Mr. Eden about the entire French situation and this would not be possible if the talks were tripartite. He recognized that the French might not like his visiting London and Paris and might strongly prefer tripartite talks. However, a tripartite meeting just did not seem suitable under the present circumstances, and on balance the Secretary was not certain that the over-all effect of his visiting London and then Paris would be bad with respect to the French situation."

The Secretary and the Ambassador also discussed the form of the announcement of the prospective trip and the Secretary's tentative schedule. (751G.00/4-754)

We indicated to British that we believed our proposal was of such vital importance, involving as it does entire principle of ability of free nations to act in coalition and in time to prevent stark tragedy and peril, that if it were deemed useful we would be glad to send someone to London and Paris or come myself, to discuss it and other related aspects of Geneva.

British have now indicated they would be glad to have me come to London April 12 to talk about it. I would very much wish to come to Paris to talk to you and Prime Minister Laniel if this were convenient and if it would not create any difficulties. I could arrive Paris afternoon of April 13 and we could have our talks on April 14. I would have to leave the night of April 14 as I must be back in Washington April 15.

In announcing my trip Thursday afternoon[6] I plan simply to state that I am making a brief visit to London and Paris to have discussion with British and French Govts on problems relating to Geneva Conference.

Information re my trip is being held in greatest secrecy here and I know you will agree with the importance of there being no premature leaks to the press prior to the announcement which we will make here on Thursday 4 p. m. Washington time. *End message.*

DULLES

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[6] Secretary Dulles actually announced his trip in a White House press release of Saturday, Apr. 10; for text, see telegram 3593 to Paris, Apr. 10, p. 1302.

751G.00/4–754

Memorandum by the Special Assistant for Intelligence (Armstrong) to the Secretary of State

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 7, 1954.

Subject: Chinese Communist Commentary on Indochina

There are five main threads to the growing body of Peiping radio commentaries on US "plans" for further "aggression" in the Far East, and especially in Indochina.

1. The US is seeking to sabotage the Geneva Conference and extend the war in Indochina.
2. Indochina is the focal point and key in a newly-evolved US "military crescent" strategy which seeks to encircle and directly threaten China from a semi-circle of bases extending from Pakistan to south Korea.
3. In desperate interim efforts to prolong the Indochina war beyond the Geneva Conference and to bring it under US military management, the US is toying with various formulas for direct intervention, including tactical air support for French troops utilizing US carrier-based planes.
4. Despite US "slanders" of Communist China and the USSR and open US hostility to Peiping, Communist China continues to work for

peaceful settlement of Far Eastern questions and welcomes negotiation at the forthcoming Geneva Conference. However, on March 25 Peiping noted in connection with the US "threat" to China that the US has failed to learn its "lesson" from the "disastrous defeats" in the Chinese civil war and in Korea. And on April 3, in commenting on Secretary Dulles' speech of March 29, Peiping warned that the answer to questions concerning the consequences of "united action" lay in the Korean war.

5. Communist China is one of the five great powers and cannot be omitted from a settlement in Asia.

The present propaganda campaign began in early February following the US announcement that air technicians and B–26 planes would be sent to Indochina. The volume of comment increased greatly about March 15, during or following the military aid negotiations with Japan and Pakistan and during the early phases of French military crisis at Dien Bien Phu.

As noted, Peiping has become more explicit as to the "threat" to Communist China, on March 25 setting the line that the US purpose is to "keep China under permanent threat of attack." The various US moves to build a "bridgehead" against Communist China are analyzed in detail:

1. The Mutual Defense Pact with the ROK
2. The MSA agreement with Japan
3. Negotiations over US bases in the Philippines
4. Continuing aid to Taiwan
5. Intervention in Indochina
6. Military aid to Thailand
7. The US–Pakistan and Turkish–Pakistan agreements.

So far, explicit threats of counteraction have been held to the reminders concerning Korea. In general Peiping continues to assert that the US will be foiled by irresistible forces seeking world peace and easement of tension, such as war weariness in France; popular US fears of another Korea; reactions in India and Pakistan to the Pak military agreements, and world horror at the H-bomb. Peiping still views these forces as surely achieving "success" for the Communists at Geneva. However, Peiping radio, like that of Ho Chi Minh and Pyongyang, has suggested no concrete formulas for settlement of the outstanding questions at Geneva, and Peiping statements concerning the need for "peace" are phrased only in the most general terms, with no implication of a willingness to sacrifice long-standing Communist demands to the interests of peace. For example, the highly-touted speech by Ch'en Yun[1] on March 5 in commemoration of Stalin's death referred in very vague terms to Stalin's "twenty years of peace" with no mention of Indochina. (This eulogy has nevertheless been cited twice by the Alsops, apparently reflecting a French government interpretation, as evidence of a Chinese Communist intention to terminate the Indochina war or at least to cease supplying Ho Chi Minh with arms.)

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[1] Vice-Premier of the People's Republic of China.

A similar memorandum has been sent to the Under Secretary.

W. PARK ARMSTRONG, JR.

751G.00/4–854

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Bonbright)

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY [WASHINGTON,] April 8, 1954.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: M. Henri Bonnet, the French Ambassador
The Secretary of State
C—Mr. MacArthur
EUR—Mr. Bonbright

M. Bonnet came to see the Secretary at 10 this morning to give the preliminary reaction of his government to our proposal for united action in Indochina. The Ambassador began by stating that he feared the Secretary would not regard the first answer from Paris as being completely satisfactory. M. Bidault wished the Secretary to know that he was very happy with this indication of increased solidarity between the United States and France in connection with a struggle which the French have been carrying on for over seven years. It was most encouraging to the French Government to know of our desire to be of even further help and the French Government in return wished us to know that they have no intention of delivering Indochina to the "Bolsheviks".

The Ambassador stated that our proposal had been debated in the Cabinet where it was regarded as an initiative of very great importance but one which required further study. The French view is that there is time for this further study and the immediate problem is the outcome of the battle for Dien Bien Phu. He went on to say that no French government could neglect even the slightest chance for bringing about peace in Indochina and it was felt that nothing should be done which would jeopardize in advance the chances of obtaining peace at Geneva. M. Bidault had talked along this line to the Secretary at Berlin and it was their present belief that the formation of a powerful coalition would give the impression to China and the world that we do not want peace. They believed that "an honest warning" was a good thing but in their view this is what the Secretary had done in his talks with Molotov[1] and in his speech of March 29. Before going further than that there is time to study various aspects of our proposal, including the important ramifications which it might have for peace in the Pacific.

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[1] Reference is to discussions during the Berlin Conference.

M. Bonnet then referred to reports out of London which indicated that there was reluctance on the part of the British Government. He also thought there would be reluctance in Thailand and the Philippines to join a coalition against Communism.

The Ambassador then repeated that in the view of the French Government our proposal should be considered in connection with a possible second step in the event that it appears that things are not going well at Geneva. In the meantime, we could study a number of factors in our proposal, including what US forces would be involved and what would be the commitments of the other parties. This could be studied by the Far East staff agency. Other questions to be answered were the nature of the mutual guarantees and how and when the coalition would go into action. He said it was M. Bidault's hope to discuss some of these questions with the Secretary in Paris at the time of the NATO meeting.[2]

The Secretary then interposed to inform the Ambassador that there was a new development since last night. The British Government had asked the Secretary to come over right away to discuss the problem and the Secretary planned to be in London on Monday.[3] He had sent word to M. Bidault last night that we did not wish to talk just in London and that he would be glad to proceed on to Paris if that were convenient. He added that the French reaction had been to recommend this but that for internal reasons the French Government had wished to keep the visit quiet for a day or two in order to avoid a debate in the Assembly prior to the Easter recess.[4] With regard to this point M. Bonnet pointed out that he had already received press reports of press leaks out of London to the effect that the Secretary is leaving immediately for London and Paris on his own initiative because his proposal had not been accepted. (Later in the conversation, in response to a direct inquiry from the Ambassador concerning the initiative for the visit the Secretary explained that in the course of the exchange of views with the British on the proposal, we had indicated that if further clarification were needed and it would be useful, we would be glad to send someone to London and Paris. The British had replied that they would be glad to have the Secretary come over and he had agreed to do so.)

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[2] The North Atlantic Council was scheduled to meet at Paris on Apr. 23.

[3] Apr. 12.

[4] In telegram 3778 from Paris, Apr. 8, received in Washington at 7:44 a. m., Ambassador Dillon reported that he had conveyed to Foreign Minister Bidault the message from Secretary Dulles regarding the desire of the latter to visit Paris for talks on Apr. 14 (see telegram 3535 to Paris, Apr. 7, p. 1286). Bidault expressed agreement, but asked that the announcement of the visit be withheld until the evening of Apr. 10, Paris time. (751G.00/4–854)

The Secretary then stated that the fallacy in the French attitude is that the French Government apparently thinks that in order to get peace in Indochina we must go to Geneva in a weak position and that if we go there in a strong position we won't get peace. In other words, they are afraid that the Chinese won't like it. M. Bonnet stated that he could not agree with this interpretation as he had indicated before that the French Government regarded the Secretary's public statement of March 29 as good. M. Bonnet regretted that the French reply was disappointing to the Secretary but his government believed that if we went too far the Geneva Conference would be a farce. The Secretary replied that he would not put it that he was disappointed. Our belief was that the dangers to South East Asia will not be met without unity of will and unity of action. If we meet the threat, one by one all will be lost. Indochina will go, Thailand will go, Malaya will go, or will be held only by very costly operations. Indonesia will almost surely be lost. The dangers to Australia and New Zealand will be greatly increased. He pointed out again that the danger was further from us and if others would not go along with us, we would know where we stood. If it became necessary for the US to base its defenses on the shores of this country—all right. The French were apparently afraid if we all stood together. But it was "crazy" to think that the US would be drawn into a war without any political prearrangements of any kind or description in order to save one outpost such as Dien Bien Phu and when we were not attacked and were without Allies. He pointed out that we did not have an alliance with France in regard to Indochina. M. Bonnet concluded by saying that he knew our country and Congress well enough to know our position in this regard.

751G.00/4–854 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, April 8, 1954—1 p. m.

3782. Limit distribution. Reference Deptel 3520.[1] As I have pointed out in my previous telegrams, French Cabinet during past few days has been entirely engrossed with Dien-Bien-Phu, which has had a tremendous impact in France. This impact has so far been to good as all of France has become proud of resistance at Dien-Bien-Phu. Communist press no longer dares attack French Expeditionary Corps. If Dien-Bien-Phu can hold, French morale on Indochina should be better than it has been for a long time. I feel that tension over this matter, coupled with Juin incident, has certainly led Cabinet to make requests which were not well thought out. For reasons which are completely beyond my comprehension, French War Cabinet which approved request for assistance contained in Embtel 3710,[2] was apparently completely surprised by negative US answer. This was told me last night by Maurice Schumann. This attitude may have contributed to obvious lack of careful thought behind request contained in Embtel 3738.[3]

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[1] Dated Apr. 7, p. 1274.

Having seen Bidault daily and sometimes twice daily during this period, I have found him to be personally far more calm and steady than French position would seem to indicate. Bidault informs me same thing applies to Laniel. Unfortunately, it does not seem to apply to Pleven, who seems at present overtired and nervous.

Confusion regarding airlifting of paratroops to Indochina seems to be entirely personal responsibility of Pleven. Bidault is personally as outraged and upset about delay as we are. On Pleven's advice, Bidault left a Cabinet meeting early to call me to see him urgently and gave me message which I passed on to you. At that time it was his understanding that airlift was matter of urgency and that days counted. Laniel has also agreed Bidault position but as usual has not taken a really strong position which would have meant overriding Pleven. Embassy officer explained our point of view at length other night to Mons,[4] who is convinced of reasonableness of our position and who then went to Pleven to see if airlift could not be speeded up. He was unsuccessful. This morning I again stressed to Bidault our disappointment at French delay and he said he would take matter up again with Laniel. Norstad saw Pleven this morning and gave him Washington reaction to French delay. Pleven at last seemed impressed and told Norstad he would advance date of first departure.

I am very pleased that we took such prompt action in making available additional equipment to French as indicated in Deptel 3534,[5] and I feel this will obviate any possibility of French trying to put blame on us for possible loss of Dien-Bien-Phu. If we had not been prompt in our response to this appeal I am certain we would have been blamed as suggested in second paragraph of reftel.

Finally, I am sure that Bidault does treat Secretary's proposal to Bonnet with great seriousness. His reaction, as reported in Embtel 3729,[6] was, I am sure, "the preliminary and hasty reflex of a deeply harassed man", as stated in reftel. However, it remains true that he feels that outcome of battle of Dien-Bien-Phu, because of psychological and morale effects here and in Indochina will be even more important to eventual result in Indochina than conclusion of agreement for collaboration in accordance with Secretary's proposal.

DILLON

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[2] Dated Apr. 5, p. 1236.
[3] Dated Apr. 6, p. 1248.
[4] Jean Mons, Permanent Secretary General of National Defense.
[5] Dated Apr. 7, p. 1285.
[6] Dated Apr. 5, p. 1243.

751.5622/3–554 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, April 8, 1954—1:35 p. m.

3541. Defense has informed us carrier *Belleau Wood* scheduled sail Toulon April 7 bound Indian port with cargo MD–450 aircraft for sale Indian Government (Paris 3216).[2] When vessel was turned over to French it was our clear understanding she would load naval fighter aircraft in France and arrive in Indochinese waters during March in operational condition. Therefore even though *Belleau Wood* continues on from India to Indochina she will not have her aircraft aboard. In light recent urgent French matériel requests along this line, it seems to us incomprehensible French should proceed this manner. Over and above urgent need for carriers and carrier-based aircraft which French insist exists, their action utilizing US ship loaned for operational purposes in essentially commercial venture would be impossible explain to American public should it become known.

Defense has made known its views to MAAG [3] but Department believes you, after coordinating with MAAG, should additionally make known our thoughts along above lines to Foreign Office.

DULLES

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[1] Drafted by McBride of WE. Repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 1886.

[2] Telegram 3216 from Paris, Mar. 5, regarding the sale of aircraft by France to India, is not printed. (751.5622/3–554)

[3] For a memorandum on this subject by Brig. Gen. C. H. Bonesteel III, Defense Member of the NSC Planning Board, to Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Chairman of the Planning Board, see *United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Book 9, pp. 380–381.

751G.00/4–854

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 8, 1954.

We have been going under the assumption that the French have, in their own minds, no real alternative to fall back on at Geneva should negotiations fail to produce a settlement which would not in effect mean the turn over of Indochina to the Communists. I believe the above assumption is erroneous in so far as the way Frenchmen like Bidault and Laniel (who do not wish to sell out) see matters. From our talk with Bonnet last Saturday [1] immediately following his return from Paris and your conversation with him this morning [2] as well as reports from our Embassy in Paris, I believe the French have reached the conclusion from your March 29 speech and other utterances which have been made by the President and others on Indochina that the U.S. has definitely made up its mind to intervene in Indochina militarily to prevent it from falling into Communists hands, whether or not others join us in united action. This assumption on the part of the French, which I honestly believe they hold, may well be in large part responsible for their unwillingness to even consider seriously the possibility of united action in Indochina until after the negotiations at Geneva have run their full course. The French undoubtedly feel that any agreement regarding united action prior to Geneva would boomerang with French public and parliamentary opinion along the lines that the French Government has prejudged the Geneva talks by taking steps which will continue the war and since they also believe that the U.S. will come to their aid, whether or not there is united action, there is no need for them to risk French opinion reacting as set forth above.

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[1] For the memorandum of the Dulles–Bonnet conversation of Saturday, Apr. 3, see p. 1225.

[2] For the memorandum of the Dulles–Bonnet conversation of the morning of Apr. 8, see p. 1290.

In other words, the French believe that we have made up our own mind irrevocably to intervene militarily to prevent Indochina from falling and since we have reached this decision, they can always fall back on us if negotiations at Geneva fail and the French Government does not feel that it could afford to sell out to the Communists.

My conclusion is that to get the French to think seriously about united action, you must face them next week with the true picture, namely, that we can assist in bailing them out only on the basis of united action and that in fact they have no alternative or fall-back position.[3]

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR II

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[3] In despatch 2563 from Paris, Apr. 8, the Embassy transmitted an eight-page memorandum on the subject of "What Happens in France if an Indochina Solution Is Not Found at Geneva." The Embassy's tentative conclusions included an estimate which is relevant to the views expressed here by MacArthur: if no settlement was obtained at Geneva, it appeared likely that a French governmental and parliamentary majority would favor "internationalization" of the war, and would seek allied and particularly United States intervention as an alternative to direct negotiations with the Viet Minh. The Embassy warned that France might then confront the United States, directly or indirectly, with the alternative of intervening with its own forces or accepting a "political settlement" between France and the Viet Minh. (396.1 GE/4-854)

751G.00/4-954 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT SAIGON, April 9, 1954—1 p. m.

1944. Repeated information Paris niact 634. Member of Bao Dai's official household called on me this morning assertedly without His Majesty's knowledge to read me a letter signed by Laniel and addressed to Prime Minister Buu Loc, summary of which follows.

French Government had noted with regret slowing-up of Vietnamese program of recruitment not only for creation of contemplated new units but also to build up existing units. French Government was likewise disappointed that deficiencies in cadres had not been made good. It noted internecine rivalries between Vietnamese authorities in region affected by Operation Atlante; and was distressed to find that in South Vietnam there was increasing misunderstanding and squabbling between Vietnamese authorities and confessional sects. These unfortunate developments threaten realization of objectives which French and Vietnamese Governments have jointly agreed upon. This comes regrettably at a time when Viet Minh for political reasons have hurled all their forces into the struggle with ultimate purpose of confronting Vietnamese Government at Geneva Conference with a position of strength.

In light of this situation, Laniel feels himself obliged to inform Buu Loc that if French Government is unable to note that Vietnamese Government will take necessary measures to correct this disquieting situation, measures which have frequently been announced but which seem forever to be deferred, "My government might be forced with the greatest reluctance to the conclusion that the effort presently undertaken by France to guarantee the independence of Vietnam would cease to have justification".

"It is indispensable that my government should in the next few days be informed of the measures decreed by the Government of Vietnam". Letter concludes on personal note that Laniel is confident "Buu Loc will interpret this written communication as being inspired by sole desire to aid Vietnam at decisive moment when its independence and liberty are at stake".

HEATH

751G.5622/4–954

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 9, 1954.

Captain Anderson (Special Assistant to Admiral Radford) asked me to pass on the following information to you regarding Indochina:

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[1] This memorandum was transmitted to the Secretary through the Executive Secretariat. The source text bears the following handwritten note from MacArthur to Roderic O'Connor, Special Assistant to Secretary Dulles: "Rod—The Secretary might glance at this before he sees Admiral Radford at 11:30 a. m. tomorrow." The Secretary's appointment book indicates that Dulles met with Radford and MacArthur, with Under Secretary Smith in attendance part of the time, at 11:40 a. m., Apr. 10. (Princeton University, Dulles papers, "Daily Appointments") No record of the meeting has been found.

1. General Ely sent a Special Representative to General Navarre and this Special Representative is now in Washington en route to Paris.[2] He has informed Admiral Radford that the French intend to make more use of Col. Rosson.[3] (Col. Rosson is one of our ablest young planners and was with General Eisenhower and General Ridgway and General Gruenther at SHAPE. He was attending the Army War College and was sent from there to Indochina a few weeks ago.)

2. General Navarre is now apparently prepared to make use of 25 to 50 U.S. Army Officer instructors in connection with the training program for raising native forces. There is still extreme sensitivity on the part of General Navarre and the French to this type of activity and it was not clear to me in exactly what capacity these instructors would operate other than that they would be used to assist in raising and training native forces.

3. General Ely, upon returning to Paris, apparently gave the impression that he had been misled in Washington; and this may have resulted in the French request for Naval air intervention. Captain Anderson thinks that General Ely actually was not misled throughout any conversations that he had here, particularly in the light of the talk he had with the Secretary and Admiral Radford.

4. General Trapnell has reported that the French are really not in a good position to make use of additional aircraft which the U.S. might furnish unless they increase the numbers of their pilot-maintenance air personnel in Indochina. This personnel must come from France. At the present time, the French are not able to make full and effective use of the aircraft which they have in Indochina.

5. With respect to the French request for B–29's, it seems apparent from the conversations which Admiral Radford's people in the Pentagon have had with General Ely's representative, that the request was "political" and not based on a sound French military judgment. I gathered that Mr. Pleven originated this request, and that it was not properly screened through the French military. The French military themselves do not believe that B–29's are the proper type of aircraft; and, furthermore, it would take a very considerable time to train French personnel to use B–29's effectively. Similarly, there has recently been an urgent request from the French for larger bombs for use in Indochina. This request also, I undertand, was Mr. Pleven's idea and had not been screened or recommended by the French military. It seems obvious from the foregoing pattern that some of the rather unrealistic requests which we have been receiving for military equipment, etc., have their origin with the civilian Ministers in the

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[2] For a memorandum of Apr. 10 from Admiral Radford to Secretary Dulles regarding conversations with Colonel Brohon, the French representative, see p. 1303.

[3] Lt. Col. William B. Rosson, USA.

French Defense Establishment, rather than from the French military itself.

I said that I would pass this information on to the Secretary and that it was much appreciated, since he would be seeing the French in Paris next week, and this kind of background would be very helpful in the event some of these matters came up. I assured Captain Anderson that we would protect the source and would not make reference to the fact that Ely's representative had talked with us so frankly. I also said that if Captain Anderson could give me a little memorandum on this, it would be much appreciated; but this was not essential, since I thought I had from him the main points which would be useful to the Secretary.

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR II

651.51G/4–854 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 9, 1954—7:13 p.m.

3575. Your 3799 repeated Saigon 431.[2] Secretary will look forward discussing status Franco–Vietnamese relations with Laniel and Bidault in Paris next week.

FYI While Department appreciates problems faced by French Government as outlined final paragraph reftel, it is desired to stress extreme importance attached here to successful prompt conclusion Franco–Vietnamese negotiations on basis which will be generally accepted as effectively perfecting independence of Vietnam. Secretary has made clear that precondition for US added participation in Indochina struggle would be, in addition to "united action" concept, complete independence for Associated States. Secretary has further made clear to Associated States (and they have presumably repeated it to French) that while he is personally convinced that French Union framework offers desirable means of furthering mutual interests, there must be a free association with sovereign right of withdrawal enjoyed by all associates. This view firmly held also by other members proposed coalition who have expressed themselves strongly to Secretary (Australia, New Zealand, Philippines and Thailand).

A bold imaginative and above all prompt solution of admittedly serious political-constitutional problems involved would be major contribution to success of common effort.

In addition to dynamic effect which we would hope for in Indochina it would be hard to exaggerate favorable effect which would be produced here and in other countries concerned and in Asia in general by successful outcome these negotiations. On other hand, failure to move forward would jeopardize chances of securing necessary support for grave decisions which may be required if Indochina is to be saved from Communist domination. End FYI.

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[1] Drafted by Bonsal of PSA. Repeated for information to Saigon as telegram 1907.

[2] The reference telegram is described in footnote 5, p. 1214.

DULLES

751G.00/4–954 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, April 9, 1954—8 p. m.

3823. Repeated information London 914, Saigon 432. Laniel delivered Indochina statement in Assembly this afternoon before unusually well filled benches and virtually all members government.[1]

Following main points of particularly short (20 minutes) but effectively delivered speech:

(1) Assembly has widely rejected two interpellations for Indochina debate this week (one Socialist, one Communist). Since October government has answered Assembly and Senate six times on Indochina questions and each time Parliament has voted support government's policy. Therefore, government cannot be reproached for not consulting Parliament. Present declaration is simply "mise-au-point" and not intended to start debate.

(2) At moment French soldiers are giving lives at Dien Bien Phu least Assembly can do is maintain sang-froid and not give world spectacle of public haggling.

(3) Policy of government rests on two main points: (*a*) "Do everything to achieve victory, at Dien Bien Phu as elsewhere, with matériel aid which Franco–Vietnamese forces are receiving from US". (*Note:* Word matériel strongly emphasized), and (*b*) "Take up under full liberty of action the negotiations at Geneva with the intention of arriving at solution". *Note:* In this portion speech Laniel confirmed Chinese participation operational activities Viet Minh for first time publicly. He referred to communications system, radar, anti-aircraft weapons, advisers, and trucks of USSR manufacture driven by Chinese.

(4) Obvious intention of enemy is to achieve objectives by force, pointing out that Dien Bien Phu campaign started only when Geneva Conference became certainty and citing recent attack on Cambodia.

(5) France will do everything possible to obtain peaceful solution at Geneva. "In the event of any serious and unexpected change in present situation and if circumstances make it necessary government will itself take initiative of informing Parliament."

(6) Speech ended with announcement of message of tribute to Colonel de Castries in which Assembly asked to join.

Speech greeted with hearty applause all benches excluding Communists.

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[1] For the record of the discussion on Indochina which occurred in the National Assembly on the afternoon of Apr. 9, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1954, Débats*, pp. 1972–1975.

Statement by Defferre (Socialist) followed. He insisted that, in deference to Parliamentary tradition, government had to inform Assembly exactly what its intentions were re Indochina and in particular re following questions:

(*a*) What were government's intentions with regard to proposal for "united front" Southeast Asia? (*b*) Would government accept participation foreign troops Indochina, i.e., American aviators, Korean and "Chiang Kai-shek" divisions, etc.? (*c*) What would government do if Chinese react by invading Indochina?

Following Defferre, Vice President Assembly Bruyneel (Independent Peasant) refused recognize Communist deputy on grounds there was no debate and Assembly rules provided for only one speaker after government statement. Assembly thereupon passed other business with approval majority floor and visible relief Laniel and Bidault.

Speech, presentation and Bruyneel ruling effectively achieved government's purpose of avoiding open debate on Indochina before Easter recess.

DILLON

751G.00/4–1054 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 10, 1954—2 p. m.

1949. Repeated information Paris 637, Phnom Penh unnumbered. I went to Phnom Penh yesterday and had long talks with King and Tioulong, his new Foreign Minister, latter giving rather elaborate luncheon my honor.

They handed me Cambodian Government communiqué of April 7 transmitted mytel 1940, April 8,[1] announcing total mobilization against Viet Minh aggression and assumption by King of command of forces, both French Union and Cambodian, operating in North and East Cambodia. King told me that he would take over command after midnight April 11. French will turn over to him ostensible operational command three Cambodian battalions which after protracted negotiations last fall Cambodians allowed to remain temporarily under French command and he will have equivalent of about two battalions of Cambodian troops including nearly complete battalion of Cambodian parachutists.

Both King and Tioulong confirmed DeJean's story of objection of bonzes (Buddhist priests) and certain Cambodian nationalists to King using French troops to drive out invading Viet Minh battalions.[2] In

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[1] Telegram 1940 from Saigon, Apr. 8, containing a summary translation of the Cambodian Government communiqué, is not printed. (751G.00/4–854)

[2] Information received from Commissioner General Dejean regarding Cambodian policy was transmitted to Washington in telegram 1915 from Saigon, Apr. 9. (751G.00/4–954)

Council of Kingdom held night of April 4–5, chief spokesman of opposition was Sam Nheang, who was Minister of Worship in preceding Cabinet and father of Sam Sary, Cambodian delegate to Paris negotiations. Sam Nheang speaks no French and is bitterly anti-French. He told King that he should not use French forces against Viet Minh and if Cambodian forces were insufficient to drive out invaders then let them stay. According Tioulong, King lost his temper and pounding table ordered Nheang to keep silent; Nheang, however, refused to be shouted down and insisted that he should be included in new Cabinet. King, however, refused.

King tells me he was so angry at this "senseless" opposition that he told Council he would not take operational command against Viet Minh but would leave Kingdom and meeting ended with that statement. Next day King thought better of it and called a new meeting and informed both opposition of Buddhist priests and democrats that there was no alternative to his using French troops, under his ostensible command, to drive out Viet Minh battalions. If he did not take command, General Navarre would be forced for security of his own troops to send force into Cambodia to drive out Viet Minh. Opposition finally reluctantly agreed. In series of late meetings, King was unable to find anyone capable of forming and presiding [over] a new national government and finally in meeting of Council of Kingdom which ended at 5 a. m. April 8, it was decided that King would again head government, delegating most of conduct of affairs however to Pennouth, who last year was President of Council. King told me scornfully that no one wanted to take responsibility of either negotiating new accords with French or taking action against Viet Minh. King remarked that if he had accepted point of view of opposition not to use French Union troops to drive out Viet Minh, it would have been equivalent of "national suicide".

Both King and Tioulong raised question of direct financial aid from US to carry through mobilization and put new regular and village units in field. I told them that if they would submit detailed list of requirements, we would give them sympathetic study, although no promises would be made. We would, of course, have to coordinate and discuss matter with French. So far and probably for long time to come it had been practical necessity to handle military aid through French, since Cambodian Defense Ministry did not have proper logistic organization to handle arms aid. As regards budgetary assistance, part of what they had recently been receiving from French was of course American funds, but we had to rely on existing French organization to handle matter. French were thoroughly conversant with Cambodian budgetary procedures and we would have greatest difficulty and expense in forming an organization to handle direct budgetary aid. I said that when Cambodian military system was perfected at some future date, if military aid was still required from US, we would consider dealing directly with them. At present time we were always ready to discuss their military development programs and in coordination with French endeavor to be of assistance.

HEATH

396.1 GE/4–1054 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France [1]

PRIORITY WASHINGTON, April 10, 1954—2:31 p. m.

3593. Following is text Secretary's statement April 10: [2]

"I have just been talking with President Eisenhower about the quick trip to Europe which I am making. I am getting off tonight for London and for Paris, and I expect to be back by the end of the week. I am going, in order to consult with the British and French governments about some of the very real problems that are involved in creating the obviously desirable united front to resist communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

"As President Eisenhower said at a recent press conference, the area is very important from the standpoint of its people, its economic resources, and from the standpoint of its strategic position in the world.

"Today, the forces of aggression seem to be concentrating just at one point, at Dien Bien Phu now, where the resistance is extremely gallant against overwhelming odds.

"But actually the danger is not at one point. There is danger to the entire area. It affects the vital interests of many nations in Southeast Asia and in the Western Pacific, including the Philippines, and Australia, and New Zealand, with whom we have mutual security treaties.

"Already the government of Thailand, one of the United Nations members which has sent troops to fight with the United Nations in Korea, told me yesterday that their government was entirely in agreement with our views, and that they would join with us in creating this united front to save Southeast Asia.

"This government believes that if all of the free peoples who are now threatened unite against the threat, then the threat can be ended. The communist bloc with its vast resources can win success by overwhelming one by one little bits of freedom. But it is different if we unite. Our purpose is not to extend the fighting, but to end the fighting. Our purpose is not to prevent a peaceful settlement to the forthcoming Geneva Conference, but to create the unity of free wills needed to assure a peaceful settlement which will in fact preserve the vital interests of us all.

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[1] Drafted by Jeffrey C. Kitchen, Deputy Director of the Executive Secretariat.

[2] This statement was issued as a White House press release following a brief meeting between Secretary Dulles and President Eisenhower, which, according to the President's appointment book, occurred at 10 a. m. (Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records, "Daily Appointments") No record has been found of their conversation.

"Unity of purpose calls for a full understanding. It seemed that this understanding would be promoted if I would personally go to London to talk to the British Government and go to Paris to talk to the French Government so that there could be a more satisfactory exchange of views than is possible by the exchange of cabled messages.

"It was M. Bidault, Mr. Eden and I who at Berlin agreed to have the Geneva Conference to discuss peace in Korea and Indochina. Now the three of us need to join our strength and add to it the strength of others in order to create the conditions needed to assure that that conference will not lead to a loss of freedom in Southeast Asia but will preserve that freedom in peace and justice.

"That is the purpose of my trip. It is, I emphasize, a mission of peace through strength."[3]

DULLES

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[3] In telegram 3836 from Paris, Apr. 12, Ambassador Dillon reported that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered the tone of the Secretary's statement excellent for use in France. (396.1 GE/4–1254)

751G.00/4–1054

Memorandum by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, 10 April 1954.

Subject: Conversations with Colonel Brohon, Assistant to General Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff

1. On 8 April Colonel Brohon, Assistant to General Ely, arrived from Paris following a hurried trip to Indo-China, where he reported to General Navarre on my recent conversations with General Ely.

2. The major points made by Colonel Brohon on behalf of General Ely were:

a. The French Government was most grateful of the prompt action taken by the U.S. to meet their requests for B–26, C–47 and Corsair aircraft. The request for B–29s was made by the French Government without reference to General Ely, who realizes that it was not a sound request from the military standpoint.

b. General Navarre will make more effective use of U.S. staff officers and will accept 25 to 50, or even more, U.S. officers to instruct the Vietnamese army. General Navarre retains the responsibility for training. Details are to be worked out between General Navarre and General O'Daniel. General Navarre hopes that General O'Daniel will arrive as a *major* general[1] and have the *same* mission as his predecessor. I informed Colonel Brohon that I agreed, but that I expected that the relationship would be much more intimate and mutually helpful than heretofore. This is no time to worry about personal sensitivities, but I will brief General O'Daniel on this score.

c. General Ely now has reservations and grave doubts that the combination of French and native forces and *only* U.S. material assistance will any longer be adequate to carry out the Navarre Plan. He now feels that, in the absence of a settlement at Geneva, "internationalization" of the Indo-China war will be necessary. The reason stated is "the increasing rate and scope of Chinese Communist assistance to the Viet Minh".

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[1] O'Daniel held the higher rank of Lieutenant General.

d. (1) General Ely was disappointed and embarrassed by the negative response of the U.S. to the French request for intervention. He had gained the impression from conversations with me that such a request would have received a prompt and affirmative reply. Now the French Governmental opinion is that they made a "blunder" in making the request. Instead of immediate help, they received from the United States a proposal for long range political action which would be too late to save Dien Bien Phu.

(2) I informed him that I was at a loss to understand how General Ely could have obtained such an impression. Such was not the intention and I considered both you and I had made that case absolutely clear to him. Incidentally, I am informed that General Valluy had no such illusion and I suspect the French of political machinations later to justify their actions.

(3) I also informed him of the action we were taking to render all possible assistance, short of intervention, to influence the outcome of Dien Bien Phu; and of the action you were taking, with great urgency, to obtain the full collaboration of the nations with vital interests in the area.

3. For your information, I have just received word from General Trapnell in Indo-China that the French air effort is not limited by either the number of planes or lack of spare parts. Rather, the shortages are acute in flight crews for B–26s and properly qualified personnel for key supervisory positions in supply and maintenance. These must be provided from Metropolitan France.

ARTHUR RADFORD

751G.00/4–1054

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Elbrick)[1]

SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 10, 1954.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: Sir Percy Spender—Ambassador of Australia
The Under Secretary
Mr. Douglas MacArthur II—Counselor
Mr. C. Burke Elbrick—Deputy Assistant Secretary, EUR

The Ambassador said there appeared to have been some misunderstanding in Australia about the Secretary's proposal regarding Indochina. He said that it was his understanding that the proposal merely emphasized the urgency of assistance to the French in Indochina and called for a coalition of interested states to give such aid as might be required to prevent further deterioration of the military situation there. He had so reported the proposal to his government but it now appeared that the Australian press was interpreting the proposal as an "ultimatum" directed against the Communist Chinese. It was his impression that these stories had their origin in the United Kingdom.

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[1] This conversation was summarized in telegram 180 to Canberra, Apr. 10, repeated for information to Wellington as telegram 142 and to London by pouch. (396.1 GE/4–1054)

The Under Secretary confirmed the Ambassador's understanding of the Secretary's proposal. He said that while the conclusion is inescapable that such a coalition might find itself in conflict with the Communist Chinese as a result of an intensification of Chinese intervention in Indochina, the President had pointed out in his communication to Churchill that the proposal did not constitute a declaration against Communist China. Its intent was to boost French morale which appeared to be waivering and to discourage the Communist Chinese. It is not inconceivable, given the proper circumstances, that the Communist Chinese might be impelled to pull the rug out from Ho Chi Minh. Any grouping of states formed pursuant to this suggestion would have to reflect the determination of those states in the general area which would be primarily affected. Admiral Radford had expressed the opinion that the use of carrier-based U.S. aircraft at this point might result in turning the tide at Dien Bien Phu. Congress, however, could only go along with the granting of such aid if a coalition of interested states declared their united intent and determination to prevent the further spreading of Communist penetration in the area. The Under Secretary assured the Ambassador that we have no intention of being dragged into a war against China—a course which no soldier would recommend.

The Under Secretary mentioned an additional political factor of which the Australian Ambassador seemed to be aware, to the effect that the French had been, or were about to, talk privately to the Soviets regarding a compromise in the Indochinese situation. The Ambassador said that he had informed Mr. Merchant only that the Australian Government's impression was that the French had reached a point where they were possibly thinking in terms of a deal with the Soviets which would involve ceding territory in Indochina in return for a Big-Five guarantee. There is no evidence that the French are actually engaged in any such negotiation. The Under Secretary said that, while the United States is not intransigent and will approach the Geneva Conference with an open mind, it does not appear at the present that a transfer of territory will solve the problem in Indochina. With this the Australian Ambassador agreed.

The Ambassador then outlined the steps which he considered to be involved in the execution of our proposal as follows: (1) the issuance of a declaration of common intent on the part of the nations involved; (2) staff discussions regarding the kind of contribution that can be made; (3) the establishment of some intergovernmental machinery on an *ad hoc* basis. He wondered if such machinery would enable the coalition to act quickly enough. The Under Secretary said that if we can obtain a Congressional resolution as a result of this common declaration of intent, he believed that the United States could offer emergency aid without delay.

The Under Secretary said that he saw no end of the fighting, as was commonly believed, with the advent of the monsoon. He said that the rains would make it difficult to supply the Communist troops but that conditions would probably be even worse for the French who were relying upon the airlift for their supplies. With the Geneva Conference coming up he felt that the Communists would continue their offensive for its political and psychological effect. On the other hand, an announcement by the interested countries of a declaration of intent to support the French in Indochina would undoubtedly give renewed hope to the garrison at Dien Bien Phu.

In reply to the Ambassador's question, the Under Secretary said that the Secretary is still considering the terms for such a declaration but that we have no fixed ideas as to its form and had not prepared a draft. He felt that this would be a matter for consultation with the other parties to such a declaration.

The Ambassador then raised the question of arrangements for the Geneva Conference and asked particularly whether we had any ideas on the chairmanship of the Conference. He was told that we had given this matter a great deal of thought and that our chief concern was to avoid any arrangement which might give the appearance of a Big-Five conference. We could accept the rotational chairmanship by the Big Four but we felt that all participating nations should take part—a point with which the Ambassador emphatically agreed. The Under Secretary said that if we agreed to a procedure which would allow the Communist Chinese and Ho Chi Minh to occupy the chair at Geneva we could expect a very sharp reaction from our Congress. On the other hand, we would doubtless find it difficult to arrive at an agreement with the Soviet on a single chairman for the entire conference. The Ambassador said that on our own side it would probably be practicable and desirable to set up a steering group of the Big Three plus four or five other countries. The Under Secretary said this would probably be necessary and spoke particularly of the importance of the other ANZUS powers taking part in such a steering group. He reminded the Ambassador, however, that Korea was the main attraction at this Conference and we should not lose sight of this fact as a result of the attention that is being paid at present to the Indochinese problem.

As the Ambassador was leaving, the Under Secretary suggested that it might be profitable to have a meeting of the ANZUS deputies some time next week when he could inform them of the course of the Secretary's conversations in London and Paris. He said that the Canadian Ambassador had expressed great interest in this matter and he felt that he might also attend such a meeting. The Australian Ambassador agreed that this might be very profitable.

Editorial Note

NSC 5416, April 10, 1954, containing the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on "United States Strategy for Developing a Position of Military Strength in the Far East," dealt in part with Indochina. The JCS recommended that the United States "continue to foster the development and improvement of the forces of the Associated States in order to enable them, with continuing French support, eventually to be capable of maintaining internal security without the assistance of French units and also to become an effective element in the containment of Communist China."

For text of NSC 5416, see volume XII.

751G.00/4–1154

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET [LONDON,] April 11, 1954.

Subject: Indochina

Participants: Secretary Dulles,
Ambassador Aldrich,
Mr. MacArthur,
Mr. Eden,
Mr. Denis Allen [1]

[The following memorandum was dictated by Mr. MacArthur following the dinner at Ambassador Aldrich's house on April 11 when the conversation reported below took place.[2] This memorandum has not been seen by the Secretary and represents Mr. MacArthur's report based on certain notes he took at the meeting.] [3]

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[1] British Assistant Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Secretary Dulles outlined the US views on Indochina, indicating that if some new element were not injected into the situation, he feared French might be disposed at Geneva to reach an agreement which would have the effect of turning Indochina over to the Communists. The new element which might be injected was the concept of united action. He described in detail our views on united action. He also briefed Mr. Eden in detail on the present situation at Dien Bien Phu according to our most recent reports, indicating that it seemed probable that it might fall and that while from a military point of view the loss of Dien Bien Phu would not be disastrous, the political and psychological effects there could lead to a situation where the will of France and the Associated States to continue the struggle no longer existed.

Mr. Eden said that as the British saw it there were two problems connected with the Indochina affair:

1. The local problem of defending Indochina, which was not unlike the Malayan problem but unfortunately it was vastly more difficult. Mr. Eden said he frankly did not know whether Indochina could be held.

2. The general problem of the whole area of Southeast Asia. In connection with this latter problem he thought it was important to have as many nations as possible in Southeast Asia behind a common effort to hold as much of the area as possible. He believed some form of NATO arrangement for Southeast Asia might be the solution. If such an arrangement could be effected, much more could be done but at present there was no basis for collective action. To build up a grouping would obviously take time but he agreed that it was most important to get the native peoples of the area fully in the picture as soon as this was feasible. While Burma would probably not wish to participate it was important to ask them to. The same is true of India and Pakistan, etc.

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[2] Secretary Dulles visited London from Apr. 11–13. For documentation on his discussions with British officials on subjects other than Indochina, see volume VI. Dulles summarized his conversation with Foreign Secretary Eden on the evening of Apr. 11 in telegram 4490 from London (for Acting Secretary Smith), Apr. 12. The telegram read in part as follows:

"3. Indochina and joint action in Southeast Asia. I explained to Eden in detail our apprehensions regarding French weakening at Geneva and our views on joint action in SEA. Eden indicated a real willingness to consider defense arrangements in SE Asia on the basis of united action but he is obviously against implementation of any coalition prior to Geneva. I believe he would strongly and actively support such action if Geneva fails. He was enthusiastic about Thailand support. He is very doubtful that Indochina can be held by additional air and sea support only and does not see where additional ground forces will come from. I had impression UK thinking not so much in terms of holding Indochina as in looking to possible arrangements for holding remainder of Southeast Asia if Vietnam goes." For the complete text of telegram 4490, see *ibid.*

[3] Brackets in the source text.

The Secretary said if invitations to join a pact went to India, Pakistan, etc., which were not really a part of Southeast Asia, it would raise the question of also extending invitations to the Chinese Nationalists, the South Koreans and possibly the Japanese. This might cause complications in getting ahead with the countries which are primarily threatened. We, of course, believe that countries like Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan and India should be kept informed and the Secretary had seen the Ambassadors of these countries prior to his departure from Washington to explain what we had in mind. Also, we thought that any security arrangement for Southeast Asia should be open ended so that eventually other countries might participate. However, to begin with we believed the arrangements should be confined to the ten countries he had indicated. Certainly an invitation to India would be rejected and it would raise the problem he mentioned above. Mr. Eden said he had not thought about the complications an invitation to India would cause. He could see that there would indeed be a real problem with respect to Formosa, South Korea, etc. If he could say that India was being kept fully informed, he thought his own problem would be met and that the Labor Party, which would certainly raise this question, could be given an answer which would be defensible. The Secretary agreed.

But to go back to what could be done now, Mr. Eden said that the situation in Europe when NATO was formed and the present situation in Southeast Asia were vastly different. In NATO we had drawn a line around our NATO area before aggression occurred. In Southeast Asia the Communists were already actively engaged in hostilities in Indochina and to draw a line at the China–Indochina border was not the same since indirect aggression has already taken place. "In other words", he said, "the Communists are already engaged in active hostilities inside our screen in Southeast Asia." He said it was, however, important to explore this matter further and suggested that Mr. Allen meet with Mr. Robertson and Mr. MacArthur tomorrow morning to develop ideas on what could be said and what could be done to build some real strength and unity in Southeast Asia.

Reverting to the situation at Dien Bien Phu, Mr. Dulles said that it was critical and one of the key problems for the French was aviation. They just did not have the air personnel to utilize effectively the aircraft which they now have. He said he would like Mr. Eden also to consider the possibility of having the U.K. dispatch some aviation mechanics to help service French planes in Indochina. Mr. Eden said that he had not thought about this but would look into it.

Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 238 : Telegram

The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Bohlen) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET Moscow, April 12, 1954—8 p. m.

1242. Sent London priority 194, repeated information Department 1242. Sent London for the Secretary and Washington for Acting Secretary. In belief that it might be of assistance to you in your talk with British and French on Indochina and possibility that you did not have opportunity to see press telegrams from this Embassy in past few days, it is of considerable interest to note how your speech of March 29 and subsequent statement before Congressional committee has struck home here. Soviet press has given increasing attention to problem of Indochina and while replete with usual propaganda charges concerning US warmongering, et cetera, has contained distinct note of concern and even disarray over Indochinese developments. *Pravda* today contains in my view very significant statement in long article devoted to your speech and alleged foreign reaction thereto. In connection allegation American plans to spread Indochinese war in Southeast Asia, *Pravda* article states "the leader of American diplomacy is infuriated at fact that USA has not succeeded in provoking the Chinese People's Republic to interference in war in Indochina: Obviously this would have served the USA as a good pretext for (internationalization of war) or (united action) as Dulles expressed it. (Both these terms mean one and the same thing, the extension of the war in Indochina by means of the dispatch there of foreign armed forces.)" It is generally significant when Soviet press cites elements of nonresponse to alleged provocation and in past this has usually reflected serious concern of Soviet Government at being drawn directly or indirectly into situations which it wishes to avoid.

Recent indications firmness American policy in regard to Indochina (following your conversations Berlin with Molotov) appear to have produced characteristic uncertainty on part of Soviet Government when faced with real determination. Provided Western powers are able to maintain united front and pressure and have clear idea exactly what they wish to achieve in Indochina, a solution on our terms is not totally beyond realm of possibility. I doubt if Soviets are willing or even able to force Communist China to complete abandonment Ho Chi Minh along lines Greek variant but in any event if British and French will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with US on present firm position, any possibility that may exist of acceptable solution will certainly be enhanced.

BOHLEN

Conference files, lot 60 D 627, CF 238

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) and the Counselor (MacArthur)

TOP SECRET [LONDON,] April 12, 1954.

Subject: Joint Action in Southeast Asia

Mr. Robertson and I met this morning with Mr. Denis Allen and two other officials of the UK Foreign Office to discuss the problem of what might be done with respect to united action in Southeast Asia to prevent that area from falling under Communist domination.

Mr. Allen said that in the light of the discussion between the Secretary and Mr. Eden last night he thought that an informal exchange of views on the following might be helpful:

(1) A tripartite statement (US-UK-French) which might be issued at the conclusion of Secretary Dulles' trip in the three capitals. It would, of course, have to be discussed with the French, and the final text should have tripartite approval. (Mr. Allen, on an informal basis, handed us at the end of the meeting a draft statement which is attached to this memorandum.)[1]

(2) It would be useful to set down on paper an outline which might serve as guidance in defining what sort of collective security system was envisaged; the countries which might participate and how the approaches to appropriate countries might be made.

Mr. Robertson and Mr. MacArthur said that following the Secretary's conversation with Mr. Eden last night, they had drawn up, at Secretary Dulles' direction, a draft declaration of common purpose which the nations whose security and vital interests are threatened by Communist expansion might sign. (A copy of this draft is also attached to this memorandum.)[2] The purpose of the draft which was being given to the UK very informally was to indicate the lines along which we were thinking. If we were in general agreement on the concept contained therein, the question of how best to get on with this project could be discussed.

Mr. Allen expressed great reserve and doubted that the UK would wish at this stage to issue such a declaration. He said that for UK internal political reasons as well as for general world opinion it was important not to take any definitive action prior to Geneva which would give the impression that decisions had been made with respect to Southeast Asia which foreclosed the possibility of a successful negotiation on Indochina at Geneva. After reading through the US draft declaration Mr. Allen said he felt it would raise serious questions in the mind of HMG. The declaration seemed to involve a guarantee to restore the territorial integrity of Indochina. This was a commitment of a very substantial nature, and he doubted that HMG could undertake such a course of action, at least until after efforts for settlement had been explored at Geneva. The US declaration appeared to him a commitment to clean up the Communists in Indochina, and if the UK and others undertook such a commitment they would have to see it through successfully.

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[1] See Annex 1 below.

[2] See Annex 2 below.

He also thought there were some differences in the estimates of the United States JCS and the UK Joint Chiefs regarding Indochina. In the first place, such a commitment would involve sending forces into Indochina which, in turn, might result in an all-out war with China, possibly involving the use of atomic weapons. In any event he felt the British Chiefs' estimate of the possibility of overt Chinese reaction to joint action by us in Indochina was much higher than the US–JCS rated it. In such circumstances world war might even result if the Soviets honored their commitments under the Sino-Soviet Treaty. Furthermore, the British Chiefs feel that if we intervene in Indochina air and sea power will not do the trick and inevitably there will be a demand for ground forces.

Mr. Robertson and Mr. MacArthur pointed out that it was all very well to try to have a successful negotiation at Geneva, but we were not clear as to what sort of solution the French themselves envisaged, nor indeed what sort the British had in mind. In so far as the United States was concerned we were opposed to any settlement which directly or indirectly turned the area over to the Communists. We did not see how we could be associated with such a settlement. Did the British hold a similar view? This seemed important to establish.

Mr. Allen said that the British did not have any good solution in mind. Among the alternatives which they had examined the territorial division of Vietnam seemed the least bad. If a settlement on this basis were arrived at hostilities would come to an end and then through a joint declaration the areas of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos as well as other appropriate states in Southeast Asia could be covered by the proposed joint declaration for united action if further aggression occurred.

In summary, Mr. Allen and his associates seemed to find great difficulties in any kind of joint declaration covering Indochina. He said that if hostilities were not actually in full course there it would be different. Mr. Allen commented that the joint declaration we had in mind involved guaranteeing all of Southeast Asia right up to the frontier of China, whereas if the guarantee covered areas where hostilities were not taking place, the commitment would be less, the risk of spreading war would be less, and the Chinese acceptance of the fact that further aggression or penetration would not be accepted and would be met by united action would be much greater.

It also seemed clear that, tentatively at least, the British have recently begun thinking about some kind of collective system of security similar to NATO for Southeast Asia. In this connection Mr. Allen said that one way to get along with consultations with like-minded people who wish to save Southeast Asia was to establish a working group similar to the old NATO group (which for over a year worked on the formulation of the Treaty prior to its signing in April 1949). Such a working group could explore all the possibilities and perhaps eventually come up with a Treaty. It was pointed out to Mr. Allen that time was of the essence and that if we had to negotiate for months before we could have a Treaty, which in turn would have to be ratified before common action could occur, the area would probably be lost.

Mr. Allen then tabled the draft tripartite statement mentioned on page 1 of this memorandum. Mr. Robertson and Mr. MacArthur gave the personal reaction that it didn't seem to meet the purposes which we had in mind.*

The meeting then adjourned with the participants joining Mr. Dulles and Mr. Eden in the latter's office.[3]

[Annex 1]

Draft Statement Submitted by the British Representatives

TOP SECRET [LONDON, April 12, 1954.]

(*Note:* This paper was given informally to Mr. Robertson and Mr. MacArthur at meeting April 12, 1954)

DRAFT STATEMENT

On the conclusion of Mr. Dulles' visit to London and Paris on April 12 and 13, for the purpose of carrying forward in discussions with Mr. Eden and M. Bidault the consultations which have been taking place between the three Governments in preparation for the Geneva Conference, the following statement was issued in the three capitals.

The Governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States have been following with concern the course of the recent heavy fighting in Indo-China. The new scale and nature of Communist rebel operations, especially the concentrated attack on Dien Bien Phu, has been rendered possible only by increasingly massive support from China. It is evident that an attempt is being made to win military victories, regardless of the cost in human life, in the hope of influencing the course of events at the Geneva Conference.

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*(At the meeting later in the afternoon Mr. Dulles told Mr. Eden he did not enthuse over the draft tripartite declaration and it was accordingly shelved.) [Footnote in the source text.]

[3] The meeting between Dulles, Eden, and their advisers regarding Indochina and Southeast Asia on the afternoon of Apr. 12 is described in telegram Secto 1 from London, Apr. 13, p. 1319.

The three Governments affirm that they will not allow the prospects of the Geneva Conference to be prejudiced by this manoeuvre. They declare their joint interest in the security, welfare and independence of the three Associated States, as well as the other states in South-East Asia menaced by Communist imperialism. Their conduct at the Geneva Conference will be governed by this joint interest in a spirit of common resolution and mutual co-operation. It will not be influenced by attempts at military coercion.

[Annex 2]

Draft Declaration Submitted by the United States Representatives

TOP SECRET [LONDON, April 12, 1954.]

DECLARATION OF COMMON PURPOSE

(Given informally to Denis Allen (UK) as indicating present U.S. thinking)

The Governments signatory hereto,

Desiring to assure the independence of the States of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia which are now subject to armed attack and invasion by forces which serve international Communism;

Realizing that this threat endangers not only those now directly involved but endangers the peace and security of the entire Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific area where they have vital interests; and,

Convinced that the situation calls for their exercise in this area of the inherent right of collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations;

I

Declare

1. That if the lands of any of them in the Southeast Asia and Western Pacific area fell under the domination of international Communism that would be a threat to the peace and security of them all;
2. That they will combine their efforts to prevent such threat;
3. That they have no aggressive purpose against any state.

II

For the purpose of carrying out this Declaration they hereby agree to seek the creation of a collective defense arrangement to maintain peace and security in this vital area, and pending the organization of such a collective system to establish:

A political council composed of the Foreign Ministers or their Deputies of the subscribing governments; and

A military committee, composed of their military representatives, to advise the Council regarding the measures required to accomplish the purposes of this Declaration.

III

They will request the United Nations to send a Peace Observation Commission to the area and to take such further action as is appropriate to maintain international peace and security in the area. Meanwhile, measures taken by the signatory governments pursuant hereto shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.

The adhesion of each government is subject to its constitutional processes.

751G.00/4-1254

Memorandum of Conversation, by N. G. Thacher of the Office of South Asian Affairs[1]

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 12, 1954.

Subject: Indochina Situation

Participants: Mr. G. L. Mehta, Ambassador of India
Mr. S. N. Haksar, Minister of India
Mr. James C. H. Bonbright, Acting Assistant Secretary, EUR
Mr. N. G. Thacher, SOA

The Ambassador and Mr. Haksar called at the Department's request for a discussion of our view of the present situation in Indochina.

Mr. Bonbright referred to the Secretary's Overseas Press Club speech and how it reflected our deep concern over the threat of communist expansion in Indochina. Communist control of the Associated States would threaten the continued independence of all of Southeast Asia, and would bring closer the threat to India itself, to Australia and New Zealand, and to Japan which was particularly dependent on the raw resources and markets of Southeast Asia. Mr. Bonbright said that under present circumstances negotiated settlements with the Viet Minh seemed to promise nothing but complete control of the three countries by the communists: a cease fire line similar to that drawn in Korea was impracticable since the character of the Viet Minh penetration was such that in the many small pockets under its control a truce would be unenforceable and communist infiltration would continue, while any attempt to form a joint government between the Viet Minh and the present Associated States would with Chinese pressure lead to eventual Communist control.

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[1] This conversation was summarized in telegram 1183 to New Delhi, Apr. 13. (751G.00/4-1354)

Mr. Bonbright stated that the Secretary had thus concluded that some joint action must be undertaken to make clear to the Chinese Communists that the expansion of communist power could not continue unchecked in this area. We hoped therefore that "unified action" might take the form of an *ad hoc* coalition including the United States, France, Britain, the Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand, Australia and others indicating their determination that communist power should spread no further. Such a grouping would be particularly desirable at this time since it would tend to strengthen our position at the Geneva conference. Further in case of communist conquest of the Associated States it would serve as a valuable unifying factor on which to base opposition to additional communist expansion. Simultaneously we would urge the French to implement as rapidly as possible the declaration of intent of last July and to give complete independence to the Associated States. In the manner of the British Commonwealth the Associated States should be entirely free to maintain or terminate this as they chose, but we would hope that they would continue their tie with the French Union.

Mr. Bonbright stressed that contrary to the impression given by speculation in the press, there was no thought of a declaration which could be interpreted as an ultimatum to the Chinese Communists. What was hoped for was that the Chinese, on becoming aware of the determination of the powers who had joined together, would quietly withdraw their support from the Viet Minh. We hoped, of course, that the fighting would not spread.

Ambassador Mehta said that in the minds of the people of Asia no matter what the other factors the war in Indochina still partook of the nature of a colonial war and that it would be impossible to carry it on successfully without a clear promise of ultimate freedom. He said that he believed that the setting of some future date for the complete freedom of the States would necessarily have to be accompanied by a guarantee, perhaps by the UN, in order to have the desired effect. The Ambassador questioned whether the Chinese Communists might not become deeply alarmed by any indications that the western powers were considering military activity in an area which like Korea was so close and so vital to China as the Associated States. The Ambassador also wondered whether there was a relation between the Secretary's call for united action and the battle for Dien Bien Phu.

Mr. Bonbright declared that we were in entire agreement with those who urged the need for complete independence for Indochina and that we had frequently urged this upon the French. However, we had found that over the years even those among the French leaders who were most nearly in accord with our viewpoint were restrained by the realization that as a practical matter the French people would have no enthusiasm for fighting for a country which had no ties with France. Mr. Bonbright stated that the Secretary's decision to seek some form of united action had not been caused by concern over the course of the isolated struggle for Dien Bien Phu. In response to the Ambassador's suggestion that this particular battle might not have taken place if we had supported the Indian proposal for a cease fire, Mr. Bonbright expressed scepticism and pointed out that the communist attack there had been launched with the goal of achieving a victory which would provide them with a psychologically advantageous setting for negotiations at Geneva.

Ambassador Mehta asked Mr. Bonbright why it was in view of the withdrawals made by the British and the Dutch from their colonial possessions in Asia with their enormous interests in those possessions, the French still clung to their little enclaves on the coast of the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Bonbright said that perhaps this could be explained in the intensity of the national pride of France which had lost so much of its strength as a nation in the war that it now resented anything which seemed further to diminish its power.

Alluding to Prime Minister Nehru's interest in the possibility of establishing a cease fire in Indochina, Ambassador Mehta inquired as to its feasibility. Mr. Bonbright said that a cease fire could, under present circumstances, work only to the advantage of the Communists. Mr. Haksar suggested that ultimately the people of Indochina must be the ones to determine their own fate and that this would seem to point to some kind of elections by which they would be permitted to decide whether they wished a communist or some other type of government and in any case no outside power should force a given type of government on them.

JCS files

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) to the Chief of Staff of the French Armed Forces (Ely)

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] 12 April 1954.

MY DEAR GENERAL ELY: I am most appreciative of your kindness in sending Colonel Brohon to Washington[1] to bring me your personal messages about Indo-China, and the reactions of General Navarre to our discussions last month.

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[1] Regarding the conversations with Colonel Brohon, see memorandum from Admiral Radford to Secretary Dulles, Apr. 10, p. 1303.

All of us here in Washington are deeply interested in the progress of the battle of Dien Bien Phu. The gallant defense of that besieged strong point by the garrison itself, and the inspirational personal leadership being displayed by General DeCastries, stimulate our greatest admiration and esteem. I am certain that their renown will be recorded in history as meeting the highest traditions of the military service. At the direction of the President, himself, the United States is rendering every possible assistance, short of actual participation by United States armed forces, to influence the battle at Dien Bien Phu and to provide a victory at that point.

I was very glad to receive Colonel Brohon's report that General Navarre will make more effective use of the U.S. staff officers and will accept the assignment of U.S. officers as instructors to assist in the training of the Vietnamese army. In my opinion, this is a step in the right direction and I agree that the details should be worked out between General O'Daniel and General Navarre.

I plan to brief General O'Daniel prior to his arrival in Indo-China. For your information, he will have the rank of major general and the same mission as his predecessor, General Trapnell. However, I am very anxious that his relationship with General Navarre be both intimate and mutually helpful. I am sure you will agree that this is absolutely necessary in the interest of France, the United States and the cause of the whole free world. This is so important as to transcend personal sensitivities on the part of either of the individuals.

Colonel Brohon informed me of your disappointment over the position of the United States Government relative to the request by the Government of France for intervention by U.S. aircraft in the battle for Dien Bien Phu. I cannot understand how you could have gained the impression from your conversations with me or with the Secretary of State, that an affirmative reply to such a request would automatically follow. I felt that it was made absolutely clear by both of us that the decision to employ U.S. forces in combat was one that could only be made at the highest governmental level and in the light of constitutional processes and congressional action. I did state that no such participation by U.S. forces was possible without a formal request by the French Government, and that I was certain that such a request, if made, would receive prompt and thorough consideration by the United States Government.

Events connected with the request have proved my prediction to be true. The Secretary of State is moving with great urgency to cope with the situation. It is receiving the continuing attention at the highest levels of the United States Government. Meanwhile, every possible effort is being made to take all action, short of actual intervention by U.S. armed forces, to assist in the defense of Dien Bien Phu until international arrangements involving the nations who are so directly affected, can be completed.

Again, my dear General, I want you to know of my deep personal, as well as official, interest over the situation in Indo-China and of Dien Bien Phu in particular.[2]

Most sincerely, [File copy not signed]

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[2] General Ely replied by letter of Apr. 20. He expressed his appreciation for U.S. aid and also stated "I do think that we fully understood each other in our conversations in Washington. The question has however, I believe, been slower than expected in its progress on the political level." ("Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait eu entre nous de malentendu au cours de nos conversations de Washington. La question, je crois, sur le plan politique, a cependant évolué plus lentement que prévu.") Ely's letter and the translation quoted here are in JCS files.

790.5/4–1354 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT LONDON, April 13, 1954—1 a. m.

Secto 1. Repeated information Paris 616. Paris for Dillon. For the Acting Secretary from the Secretary. Following is résumé of our discussions with British today (April 12) on united action in SEA:

This morning while I was meeting with Eden on other matters, Robertson and MacArthur had preliminary discussions with Denis Allen on this subject.[1] They outlined in detail to Allen our thinking on possible declaration of common purpose which might be issued by countries of SEA whose security and vital interests are threatened by Communist expansion in this area. They also expressed our belief that some such declaration would enable us to go to Geneva with position of strength and alternative to any settlement which might involve turning over of this area to Communists.

Allen expressed great reserve, indicating that for UK internal political reasons as well as the question of general opinion it was important not to take any action which would give the impression that decisions had been made prior to Geneva which foreclosed the possibility of a successful negotiated settlement there. Allen also felt that such declaration would involve guaranteeing territorial integrity of Associated States and liquidation of Communist military activities there which in turn would imply commitment re military forces of substantial nature. He did not believe that HMG could reach such decision until efforts for settlement had been explored at Geneva and had failed.

Allen mentioned apparent differences in estimates of our JCS and UK chiefs. We gathered British chiefs feel that joint intervention in Indochina by ourselves and other likeminded people would probably result in overt Chinese intervention. But even if this does not occur, the British feel that, in addition to air and navy, additional ground forces will be needed.

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[1] See memorandum of conversation, Apr. 12, p. 1311.

When queried re UK ideas on a negotiated settlement at Geneva, Allen stated frankly UK does not have any good solution in mind. Least bad alternative might be territorial division of Vietnam. If hostilities ceased on this basis, the nations interested in the security of SEA could join together in some form of collective arrangement which would then in effect serve notice that further expansion into South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia would be met with united action. Admittedly, however, such division of Vietnam was not good answer and there was no guarantee that it would stop the Communist drive.

We had impression that UK is thinking of some form of collective arrangement for SEA modeled on NATO but that they do not quite see how it can be put into effect with respect to Vietnam where full-fledged war is going on without involving them in commitment to liquidate that war successfully.

At our meeting this afternoon,[2] I discussed this question at length with Eden, who indicated that it did not seem possible to give an undertaking or implement any arrangements prior to Geneva which would become operative if Geneva conference failed. He said frankly that there is real problem of UK parliamentary and public opinion; that any implied commitment for involvement in the Indochina war would be intensely unpopular; but that if negotiations at Geneva fail the situation may well be different. In the light of these factors, HMG did not feel that it could imply that it was going to take action involving very serious commitments when in fact it was not now in a position to make such commitments. On the other hand, he was impressed with the reasons I gave why US and UK should indicate that we are prepared to consult with other nations in SEA whose security is also threatened with view to possible collective defense measures looking to security and freedom of area.

I tabled paper giving my thoughts on what such joint communiqué might look like, and after some discussion we agreed on text in immediately following telegram[3] subject to indicated alternatives to be resolved tomorrow. While UK is obviously opposed to organizing united action prior to Geneva, I think they have moved forward considerably as result our discussion. I am encouraged that they seem willing to state publicly their readiness to examine possible collective defense measures.

[Dulles]

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[2] Apr. 12.

[3] *Infra.*

790.5/4-1354 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT LONDON, April 13, 1954—1 p. m. [*a. m.*]

Secto 2. Repeated information Paris 617. For the Acting Secretary from the Secretary. Paris for Dillon. Following is text of draft joint communiqué[1] mentioned in immediately preceding message.[2] The bracketed phrases give the US and UK alternatives. We do not like the UK version since it implies we would have to establish a collective defense system before we could organize any united action. For example, NATO collective defense system took almost a year to work out.

Begin verbatim text.

We have had a full exchange of views with reference to Southeast Asia. We deplore the fact that on the eve of the Geneva Conference the Communist forces in Indochina are increasingly developing their activities into a large-scale war against the forces of the French Union. They seek to overthrow the lawful and friendly government of Vietnam which we recognize; and they have invaded Laos and Cambodia. We realize that these activities not only threaten those now directly involved, but also endanger the peace and security of the entire area of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, where our two nations and other friendly and allied nations have vital interests.

Accordingly, we are ready to take part, with the other countries principally concerned, [US version: "in an examination of the possibility of collective defense measures"] [UK version: "in an examination of the possibility of establishing a system of collective defense"] to assure the peace, security, and freedom of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations.[3]

It is our hope that the Geneva Conference will lead to the restoration of peace in Indochina. We believe that the prospect of establishing a unity of defensive purpose throughout Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific will contribute to an honorable peace in Indochina.

End verbatim text.

Although UK reluctant accept US version (above) I shall press Eden hard on this tomorrow. Eden would like to read communiqué at 3:30 p.m. tomorrow when he will make a statement in Parliament.[4] We will decide exact hour of release tomorrow morning.

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[1] The text which follows is identical with the Indochina-Southeast Asia portion of the statement issued by Secretary Dulles and Foreign Secretary Eden on Apr. 13, subject to the revision of the second paragraph as indicated in footnote 3, below. For the complete text of the statement of Apr. 13, see Department of State *Bulletin*, Apr. 26, 1954, p. 622.

[2] *Supra.*

[3] Brackets in the source text. The second paragraph of the statement as issued on Apr. 13 read as follows:

"Accordingly we are ready to take part, with the other countries principally concerned, in an examination of the possibility of establishing a collective defense, within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, to assure the peace, security and freedom of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific."

[DULLES]

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[4] For Eden's statement of Apr. 13 and the debate which followed, see *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 5th series, vol. 526, cols. 969–975.

751G.00/4–1354 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT LONDON, April 13, 1954—2 a. m.

Secto 3. Repeated information Paris 618. For the Acting Secretary from the Secretary. Paris for Dillon eyes only. During my discussion with Eden re Indochina, I explained great shortage of French aviation personnel and asked him to consider possibility of sending qualified UK aviation mechanics to assist French in maintaining their aircraft. I told Eden we had USAF personnel now in Indochina performing such services. Eden inquired if our personnel were in uniform and I replied affirmatively.

He said he would check to see whether UK could make some such contribution but was careful not to commit himself.

[DULLES]

396.1 GE/4–1354 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the President

TOP SECRET LONDON, April 13, 1954—3 p. m.

Secto 10. Eyes only for the Acting Secretary from Secretary. Please pass to the President. Have had two days of very satisfactory talks dealing not only with Indochina but with other acute international problems. Churchill, Eden and others most cordial, and send you their warm regards. Believe accomplished considerable in moving the British away from their original position that nothing should be said or done before Geneva.[1] The communiqué issued today [2] indicates a large measure of acceptance of our view of the danger and necessity for united action. However, obviously, the British are extremely fearful of becoming involved with ground forces in Indochina, and they do not share the view of our military that loss of northern Vietnam would automatically carry with it the loss of the entire area. They think more in terms of letting a buffer state be created in the north; then attempting to hold the rest of the area by a south Asia NATO. This would give Churchill the enlarged ANZUS which he has always sought. Despite remaining difference in emphasis and timing, feel satisfied that a very big step forward has been taken in bringing British thinking into harmony with our own.

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[1] Secretary Dulles summarized his final meeting with Eden on the morning of Apr. 13 in telegram 4523 from London of the same date. He stated the following with respect to discussions of united action in Southeast Asia: "I told Eden I intended to press French re real independence for Associated States, and hoped he would use influence in same direction. Also told Eden after we completed this trip we would get in touch with British to see how best we might proceed in organizing united will to resist aggression in SEA. One possibility was to establish informal working group in Washington. Eden thought this good idea and said Makins would be available."

For the full text of telegram 4523, see volume VI. For Eden's account of the discussions of Apr. 12 and 13, see *Full Circle*, pp. 108–109.

[2] For the pertinent portion of the communiqué, see telegram Secto 2, p. 1321.

Press generally friendly, and *Daily Worker* pays compliment of saying am most unwelcome guest since 1066.[3]

Leaving now for Paris.

DULLES

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[3] The following message from President Eisenhower to Secretary Dulles was transmitted in telegram 3646 to Paris, Apr. 14: "Dear Foster: Thank you very much for your cable. I agree that the *Daily Worker* has succeeded in giving you one of the finest compliments of the year. If you should feel a real desire to come down here on Monday and chat with me during lunch, I will be glad to pick you up and return you. The trip is on the order of a little over two hours each way. Alternatively, of course, we can have a telephonic conversation. With warm regard, D. D. E." (110.11 DU/4-1454)

Secretary Dulles accepted the President's invitation to visit him at Augusta, Georgia, by letter of Apr. 15. (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Meetings with the President") For information on their discussions of Monday, Apr. 19, which dealt largely with various aspects of the Geneva Conference, see Dulles' memorandum of conversation, vol. XVI, p. 532.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 193d Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, April 13, 1954[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 193rd Meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Acting Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Acting Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General (for Items 1 and 2); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Mr. Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the White House Staff Secretary; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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[1] Prepared by S. Everett Gleason, Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, on Apr. 14.

The following is a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

1. *Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security*

Using both a chart and a small relief map of the Dien Bien Phu area, the Director of Central Intelligence briefed the Council on the latest developments in this battle. The President asked a number of questions regarding the terrain. Mr. Dulles then announced that the French had succeeded, during the period April 7 to 12, in dropping another battalion (Foreign Legion) into the fortress. This brought the total number of battalions replaced by the French to four. Mr. Dulles indicated that the CAT pilots operating to supply Dien Bien Phu were very critical of the performance of the French Union Air Force. The French dropped their supplies from very high altitudes, as much as 8000 feet, which explained why so many of the drops fell into the hands of the enemy. The CAT pilots, using C–119's, dropped their supplies from very low altitudes.

Mr. Dulles indicated that the French were reporting some 13,000 new Vietminh replacements as having reached Dien Bien Phu, and that a comparable number were on their way to the scene. The great majority of these reinforcements were raw recruits. Renewal of the mass assaults was anticipated by the French about April 15.

In other parts of Indochina fighting had been stepped up slightly. This, said Mr. Dulles, was in preparation for the Geneva Conference.

The President observed that he could not avoid going back to the reason why the French made no effort to relieve their situation at Dien Bien Phu by sending a French column to the relief of the fortress. This would at least have the advantage of drawing off the Vietminh reinforcement. Admiral Radford replied that he had gone into this question with the same curiosity. He pointed out that Dien Bien Phu was 140 miles from Luang Prabang. Up to within 30 miles of the fortress this road actually consisted merely of a trail. While this area had been infested with guerrillas earlier, the French now claim that these guerrillas are largely concentrated at Dien Bien Phu. Accordingly, Admiral Radford said that he felt that the French could move forces along this route if they had the will to do so. Certainly, said Admiral Radford, we would have done so if the United States faced the same problem as the French.

. . . .

7. *Reports by the Acting Secretary of State*

Secretary Smith said that he had just received a report on the discussions between Secretary Dulles and Mr. Eden on Southeast Asia, which report the President himself had not yet seen. This consisted of a joint communiqué to be issued by Secretary Dulles and Mr. Eden.[2] In the first instance, a false impression had been current that the United States was trying to induce its allies to issue an ultimatum to the Communists with respect to Indochina. The initial reception in London had therefore been quite cool. For purely internal reasons alone, the British had insisted that it was undesirable to give the impression that we had closed the door on any results from the Geneva Conference. The British Chiefs of Staff were also worried that united action would bring Chinese interference. They also believed that united action would require ground forces additional to those already in Indochina. In view of these difficulties the agreement to explore the possibilities for united action, as set forth in the joint communiqué, represented a considerable achievement.

With respect to the Geneva Conference, Secretary Smith said that our great concern was to avoid being traded out of all our bargaining positions by our allies prior to the opening of the Conference. Secretary Smith expressed confidence, however, that the United States would be able to prevent such a sell-out.

With respect to the work of the Special Committee created by NSC Action No. 1019,[3] Secretary Smith said that the Committee had been given two missions, the first to devise additional steps to help the French win the battle for Indochina. He said that he believed our response to French requests for additional assistance in carrying out the Navarre Plan had been so prompt and effective as to be almost miraculous. The French performance, on the contrary, was often worse than disappointing. They had brought themselves to order two additional battalions to be sent to Indochina, with an airlift provided by the United States, and when assured that such airlift would be provided, had given two weeks leave to the personnel of the two battalions. This illustrated the whole situation.

The second mission given to the Special Committee was to survey the range of possible actions open to the United States in the event that the French were defeated or withdrew from Indochina. The proposals offered by the Special Committee had been overtaken in the main by the Planning Board's report to the Council at last week's meeting.[4] Accordingly, the Special Committee wished to be relieved of further responsibility with respect to this mission.

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[2] See telegram Secto 2 from London, Apr. 13, p. 1321.

[3] The text of NSC Action No. 1019 is included in extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 181st Meeting of the National Security Council, Jan. 21, p. 986.

Mr. Flemming inquired whether, on the basis of Secretary Smith's report, it would be accurate to state that we will not work out any regional grouping of nations for the defense of Southeast Asia prior to the Geneva Conference. The President said that we really couldn't hope to do more than to get the nations in question to look into the problem, as opposed to actually agreeing to create the regional organization. He nevertheless believed that the British would ultimately come along, as did Secretary Smith.

With respect to the Geneva Conference, the Vice President inquired whether the Korean and Indochinese questions were to be discussed at the Conference at the same time. Secretary Smith replied not if we could help it. We very much hoped that the Communists would manifest such complete intransigence with regard to a settlement in Korea, that some of the pressure on us to agree to a negotiated settlement in Indochina would be relieved.

The National Security Council:[5]

a. Noted and discussed an oral briefing by the Acting Secretary of State on:

(1) The results of the discussion by the Secretary of State with Foreign Secretary Eden on Southeast Asia.

(2) The problems facing the United States at the Geneva Conference.

b. Noted the President's agreement that the Special Committee created by NSC Action No. 1019 be considered as having completed its work and be discontinued, in view of a report by the Acting Secretary of State that:

(1) The Special Committee recommends that it be relieved of further responsibility under NSC Action No. 1019–*b*; and

(2) When the Special Committee reported to the Operations Coordinating Board on March 3, 1954 with respect to NSC Action No. 1019–*a*, the OCB assumed responsibility for continued coordination of actions contained in that report.[6]

Note: The action in *b* above subsequently transmitted [to] the Under Secretary of State.

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[4] For the memorandum of discussion at the 192d Meeting of the National Security Council, Apr. 6, see p. 1250. Regarding the report of the Planning Board, see footnote 2, *ibid.*

[5] Points *a* and *b* below constituted NSC Action No. 1095, Apr. 13, 1954. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

[6] For the Special Committee's report of Mar. 2, transmitted to the OCB on Mar. 3, see p. 1109.

740.5/4–1454

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)[1]

[Extract]

TOP SECRET [PARIS,] April 14, 1954.

. . . .

We then discussed Indochina briefly. M. Laniel said the effect of the gallant stand at Dien-Bien-Phu had greatly helped him in the Parliament because, except for the Communists, even those members who wish to withdraw from Indochina do not feel that they can say anything which would undermine the morale of Colonel de Castries' forces defending Dien-Bien-Phu. However, if Dien-Bien-Phu falls a most serious situation will result.

I said to M. Laniel that I recalled the assurances, that his government would take no action which directly or indirectly would turn Indochina over to the Communists, which he had given me when I saw him last July regarding increased U.S. assistance for the Indochinese war. I also recalled that he had given similar assurances informally to the President at Bermuda. I said that we knew that his determination not to turn Indochina over to the Communists was unshakeable and this had been one of the considerations which had led us to massively increase our aid to the French, including many additional aircraft and other types of supplies.

M. Laniel reaffirmed that he would not be a party to turning the area over to the Communists. He said, however, that the situation was very difficult in France because of war weariness and a desire on the part of many people to get out of Indochina at any cost.

I said that there was one thing the French could do rapidly to aid in the defense of Dien-Bien-Phu and the improvement of their military position in Indochina. This was to send additional aviation mechanics and maintenance personnel speedily to the area. I said that there was such a shortage of personnel of this category that the French were not able to maintain and make full operational use of the aircraft they now had in Indochina and that for the U.S. to furnish additional aircraft did not make much sense if there were not the flight and maintenance personnel to operate them. M. Laniel said that he was not aware of this and I had the impression that he had not been brought very fully into the picture by the French National Defense people with regard to the difficulties of the French air forces in Indochina, stemming in considerable part from the lack of qualified personnel.

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[1] Secretary Dulles and his party flew from London to Paris on the afternoon of Apr. 13. This conversation between MacArthur and Laniel occurred at the Prime Minister's private residence from 10:15 p.m. to midnight that night. For the portion of the memorandum not printed here and additional documentation on discussions on subjects other than Indochina which occurred during the Secretary's visit to Paris, Apr. 13–14, see volume VI.

790.5/4–2154 : Despatch

The First Secretary of Embassy in France (Godley) to the Department of State

SECRET

PARIS, April 21, 1954.

No. 2667

Subject: Minutes of Conversations held in Paris by the Secretary of State and Foreign Minister Bidault with relation to "Unified Action" in Southeast Asia.[1]

The following are the minutes of the conversations concerning "Unified Action in Southeast Asia" held at Paris on April 14 at the Foreign Office.

Participants

Foreign Minister Georges Bidault	Secretary of State Dulles
Messrs. Alexandre Parodi	Messrs. Merchant
Jean Chauvel	Robertson
Roland de Margerie	MacArthur
Francis Lacoste	Ambassador Dillon
Maurice Schumann	Messrs. Achilles
Jacques Roux	Bonsal
James [*Jacques*] Baeyens	McBride
Claude Cheysson	Gibson
Folin	

M. Bidault opened the meeting with the usual welcoming remarks. He referred to the number of times the same protagonists had met in this same room. He asked Mr. Dulles to explain what he had in mind, and particularly what had been the nature of his conversations with Mr. Eden. He expressed the gratitude of the French Nation for the U.S. effort and aid for Indochina and referred to the meeting of urgent requests for matériel for Dien-Bien-Phu in record time—on one occasion within 24 hours.

Mr. Dulles replied that he, too, felt great satisfaction in finding himself once more in this room where he had met with M. Bidault so many times and, at all times, to the benefit of the United States. His trip abroad was occasioned by the thought that it would be useful to explain more fully than was possible by cable the motives which had led the United States Government to embark on its present course as regards Indochina. He reminded M. Bidault of a statement he had made to him at Berlin to the effect that if Indochina were inscribed on the agenda for Geneva it would lead to increasingly vehement attacks by the Viet Minh. The latter should be expected to intensify their military efforts in a reckless manner in order to improve their negotiating position at Geneva. He remarked on the large increase in Chinese aid which the Viet Minh had received since the Berlin Conference. The purpose was clearly to create a political position at Geneva which would permit profitable negotiations by the Viet Minh. The other nations should find a political asset to counterbalance this threat. We must go to Geneva with it and, Mr. Dulles suggested, it might take the form of a united defense of other nations in the area. We must be in a position of [*to*] counteract the effort which the enemy will pursue, even possibly during the Conference. Unless Indochina is held by anti-Communist forces, Mr. Dulles stated, the whole area could collapse. The war might spread to Siam, Malaya, Indonesia and other countries in the area. Indonesia is at present balanced between Communist and anti-Communist forces and an advance in the area of Communist control would cause it to turn Communist. The countries with interests in the area should join forces, determined to resist and to make the Communists desist from their intentions to conquer all Southeast Asia.

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[1] These minutes record the discussions which occurred during a 2-hour meeting at the Quai d'Orsay on the morning of Apr. 14. The meeting was summarized in telegram 3888 from Paris, Apr. 14. (751G.00/4–1454) Informal notes of the same meeting by Assistant Secretary Merchant are in EUR files, lot 59 D 233, "Secretary's Trip to Paris and London 4/12/54".

Mr. Dulles has had conversations with Congressional leaders of both houses on this subject and they think that the continuation of aid and participation thereby of the United States in the struggle depends on the recognition by the other nations of the area of the fact that there is such a peril. The countries which have immediate interests in the area are Thailand, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Burma. If they do not recognize the peril it would be difficult for the United States to continue the struggle or take a more active role in it. If other countries did not take the same interest as the United States, it would be difficult to have the United States Congress and the United States people continue with their present policy of which the first objective was to save the territory from Communist domination.

Mr. Dulles continued to say that the whole purpose of the United States Government is to increase the possibility of an acceptable solution in Geneva. The United States does not wish the war to continue. It wishes peace in Indochina. The United States was able to conclude an armistice in Korea and does not seek any different result in Indochina. The United States study concludes that no peace is possible in Indochina unless the Communists give up their intention of conquer-ing all of Southeast Asia. If Geneva is but a step toward that goal, it will do no good. The enemy must recognize that they cannot conquer all of Southeast Asia. We must, therefore, create such strength as to deter them. It is under such conditions that the best chances of a successfully negotiated peace at Geneva exist.

Mr. Dulles continued to state that he had made an address, two or three weeks ago, in which he spoke of the importance of creating unity in order to meet the threat in Indochina. He had had conversations in Washington with the Ambassadors of the countries most concerned—France, the United Kingdom, the Associated States, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and Thailand. In addition, the following other countries were informed for information purposes of what Mr. Dulles had in mind—Burma, India, Ceylon, Pakistan, Nationalist China, Korea and Japan.

Mr. Dulles stated that the reception he received from these countries was, on the whole, satisfactory. The idea seemed to be welcome, especially by Thailand and the Philippines, both of whom have subsequently announced their intention to proceed with the plan. Australia and New Zealand received the suggestion favorably but cited their desire to act only in conjunction with the United Kingdom. There was hesitation on the part of the United Kingdom due to the lack of understanding of the U.S. purpose. It was misunderstood in some quarters, particularly in the press, that Mr. Dulles wished to give Pekin an ultimatum to desist from their present support of the Viet Minh or to face the prospect of war. This was a gross misunderstanding. It therefore seemed desirable to have direct talks with the United Kingdom Government and this suggestion was shared by the United Kingdom itself. Mr. Dulles therefore went to London last Sunday.[2]

He had had talks in London on Monday and Tuesday with Mr. Eden and his associates and had dined on Monday evening with Mr. Churchill.[3] Once the purpose of his visit had been made clear it was accepted and at the time of his departure a joint communiqué was issued yesterday.[4] The Communiqué fully satisfies the purposes which Mr. Dulles had in mind in coming to the United Kingdom. It agrees to studying the establishment of a common defense in the area. It makes clear that the purpose exists before Geneva to shrink the intentions of the Chinese Communists without which they might not otherwise have come to Geneva.

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[2] Apr. 11.

[3] For text of the memorandum of conversation by the Secretary of State describing discussion which occurred at his dinner meeting with Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Secretary Eden on Apr. 12, see volume VI. The memorandum provides no indication that Indochina or Southeast Asia were discussed at that time.

[4] For the pertinent portion of the communiqué, see telegram Secto 2 from London, Apr. 13, p. 1321.

Mr. Dulles recounted that there had been some discussion in London as to whether it was desirable to create a formalized treaty system in the Asian area similar to the North Atlantic Treaty. He expressed the view that what the United States had in mind might lead to such a result but that that should not be looked upon as an immediate purpose. It would take 18 months to negotiate the signatures, ratifications, etc., of such a system of treaties, whereas at the present time we were faced with a critical situation which might develop before the treaties could be concluded. We should do something to create an association now on an *ad hoc* basis before attempting the creation of a series of multilateral treaties on a formula comparable to that of NATO. The latter is the basis on which the United Kingdom had been thinking, while the former is more along the lines of our thoughts. In other words, the United Kingdom had been thinking of an arrangement on a more or less permanent basis while we had been thinking of an *ad hoc* basis for the time being. This represented the slight difference in point of view which Mr. Dulles had encountered in London. Mr. Dulles continued to state that the United Kingdom had indicated they would take part at once in an informal working group in Washington in which their Ambassador would participate in studies in which other interested Governments would take part. They intended to explore all possibilities and to work out the practical details of the proposal Mr. Dulles had in mind.

Mr. Dulles stated that in the course of his conversations with the representatives of the interested States, a great deal of emphasis had been put on the status of the Associated States as independent nations. He believed that it would greatly help in the creation of a unity of purpose at Geneva if their independence could be manifested beforehand. Other countries attach a great deal of emphasis to this point. Mr. Dulles recognized the difficulties of the French Government in this respect and realized that the people of Viet Nam were neither ready nor willing to make an effort to preserve their independence even if they had it. He recognized equally the advantage of the voluntary participation of the States in the French Union. There was a feeling among these countries, which was shared in the United States, that the land fighting should be assumed more and more by indigenous troops. The Viet Minh proved that this is possible. The Viet Nam Government has the same capacity to recruit the same men as the Viet Minh. There was also an impression that the Vietnamese would do better if they were fighting for their independence and would take the wind out of the sails of Ho Chi Minh if they had actually acquired that independence.

He continued to state that from a purely material standpoint the balance sheet of the two forces on either side reflected a great superiority of the French Union Forces. They outnumbered the Viet Minh Force by about two to one, according to his understanding. Moreover they had complete air control while the Viet Minh had none. Furthermore, while supplies sent in by China to the Viet Minh had increased up to an estimate of 4,000 tons a month, this figure did not compare with one of nearly ten times as much for the matériel which was being sent in by the United States alone to support the loyalist forces. On such a balance sheet it would, therefore, appear that the balance is on our side. Many people, with whom Mr. Dulles did not necessarily agree, attributed the superior powers of the Viet Minh to the fact that it felt it was fighting for independence while the others were not sure. In any case, this is a factor which must be taken into account.

Finally, to summarize, Mr. Dulles concluded that he believed that if it were possible to create a condition where the Communists would recognize that it was not possible to extend their empire into Southeast Asia, then possibly a negotiated settlement could take place in Geneva which would result in real peace. If, on the other hand, the Communists came to Geneva believing that they could extend their rule to the rest of Southeast Asia there would be no settlement or there would be one which would simply be an interlude to a resumption of armed action on an even more extensive scale. Mr. Dulles believed that the free nations must marshal enough strength to join our efforts to make the Communists renounce their purpose and permit the area to resume its peaceful existence.

M. Bidault then spoke, saying that he had nothing to add to what Mr. Dulles had said except that he questioned one point which would create difficulties for the French Government. The one problem is the question of timing and the moment when the suggestion should be carried out. He commented that if such a suggestion had been made three years ago matters might have been very different. We must take into account all considerations in view of our common purpose. Before explaining the perspective of the French Government he wished to make one particular point. The independence of the Associated States was first proclaimed in 1949 and was again proclaimed in 1953. If the transfers arranged in the various treaties have not yet taken place it is only because the French received no counterpart (contrepartie), especially as concerns military matters where the transfer of fighting responsibility and burden was refused on the part of the native government.

He continued to state that it was a very different matter to make a lien with a country which, for 1500 years, has never had any sovereignty. Independence was not a key to courage. What the French Government proposes is an integration with people with 1500 years of history behind them during none of which period they have had any sovereignty. He compared this with the fact that France and Germany were making a lien which had never existed before either, but they were two sovereign nations with long histories of sovereignty. M. Bidault then referred with considerable irony and bitterness to the amount of aid which might be expected from such countries as Thailand, Burma and the Philippines. What would they bring to Viet Nam after the French had left? Nothing. We would then see what would happen to their determination and courage.

The Foreign Minister continued to say that his language might not be diplomatic but that it was at least outspoken and frank. With regard to the numerical figures cited by Mr. Dulles he was not under the impression that they were correct. The Viet Minh had an army of some 350,000 men of very unequal value, while the French Expeditionary Force amounted to 250,000 men and the Viet Nam National Army to 200,000 men. To this should be added approximately 40,000 from Laos and Cambodia making a total of approximately 500,000 men. The contribution of the native troops was not negligible. It was a true contribution. There were other factors which he was not taking into account. A large part of the indigenous forces had little value in actual fighting. The French were obliged to defend everything everywhere. It was a war that was both military and political. Suppose they had chosen to abandon the jungle and mountains and defend only the delta? They should thereby release themselves of an enormous responsibility involving approximately nine-tenths of the country. Napoleon had carried out such a system with great success. He had less men than the enemy but he picked the place to fight them. If the French abandoned such a large area it would include Laos and Cambodia. This they cannot bring themselves to do as they cannot abandon the Associated States one by one. They are obliged to defend all the Associated States wherever and whenever they are attacked.

M. Bidault reminded Mr. Dulles that the war was almost 7 years old and that for a long time it had been ignored and misunderstood. It is a heavy burden—no longer financially thanks to U.S. aid—but a great burden on the French army and national morale. Many Frenchmen ask why the war is continuing. It is being carried on 12,000 kilometers away. Many people in and out of Parliament claim that while France is fighting the Communists abroad the war is nourishing them at home. This is an unpleasant but true fact. France must have an opportunity to negotiate an honorable peace. This is the idea of many people, including those sitting around the table on the French side. The Government cannot do anything at Geneva which gives the impression that the conference is not likely, from the first, to reach results. The war in Indochina is a French war and has been since the beginning, not overlooking U.S. aid. Now the question arises—should it become a collective war? If Geneva fails, collective security is a possibility but nothing can be done before Geneva which would allow it to be said or thought that anything had been decided beforehand about what was to be done if Geneva failed.

The chances for success at Geneva are considered weak. M. Bidault agreed with Mr. Dulles that nothing must be accepted in exchange for Communist promises. Nevertheless, M. Bidault had a thought, which was shared by all his collaborators at Berlin, that Russia is afraid of China and the possibility that China might drag Russia into something against her will. She fears that China might take initiative on her own. China is probably now in a state of famine and Russia cannot any longer give her the food which she needs. It might be possible to get territorial concessions we need from the Chinese. All this is of course only a hypothesis. The French, however, cannot get it out of their minds and it must be taken into account when considering the prospects at Geneva. The French have experts working on the Geneva Conference preparations. They are exploring all possibilities. M. Bidault did not think it appropriate to get into detail with the Secretary. The summation of his ideas is that we should go to Geneva having prepared all our positions in advance but not in any sense conveying the impression that we had tied our hands in advance. This is not in conflict with either Mr. Dulles' reasoning or his presentation.

M. Bidault continued to say that we must give no credence to the argument that Geneva is in any sense a sham (trompe l'oeil) and condemned from the beginning. "I have been accused of that by enemies of the Government (*note:* an apparent reference to Mendès-France) and I stated in reply that we must give Geneva a chance and see what happens there. In any event, our policy is not peace at any price."

M. Bidault concluded by saying that this summed up what he had to say and he thought it best to now put things in writing in the short time which remained to us.

Mr. Dulles replied that regarding the Soviet attitude and the possibility that the USSR might exert an influence on Communist China to desist, he believed that the Soviets would only do so because they feared that the Chinese might drag them into a general war but that if they thought the Chinese could take over countries one by one they would be pleased to have them do so.

M. Bidault agreed with this but commented that it was not only Russia who feared a general war. The opponents of Communism everywhere were afraid that we were heading toward a general war.

G. McMurtrie Godley

651.51G/4–1454

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State[1]

TOP SECRET [PARIS,] April 14, 1954.

Participants: The Secretary of State
M. Bidault

Following the luncheon at the Quai d'Orsay today, M. Bidault and I had a private discussion. He showed me a personal letter dated March 23 which he had received from General Navarre, which is the subject of a separate memorandum.[2]

I said to M. Bidault that I frankly thought the French were on the wrong track in their negotiations with the Associated States. The French talked about full and complete independence and yet in the position they take, in the negotiations they appear to be giving the impression, by insisting that there could be no provisions permitting the withdrawal of the Associated States from the French Union, that in fact they wished to perpetuate their control of Indochina. I said that we all realized that as of this moment Vietnam and other Associated States were not in a position to assume, safeguard, and protect their own independence. They did not have effective and trained personnel to man the governmental machinery, they obviously were not alone capable of carrying on the war to protect their freedom, and they were not yet very experienced in self-government. I suggested the possibility that some formula could be found which would meet the point and make clear that the French would wish the Associated States to have full independence. For example, a provision might be inserted that five years after the conclusion of hostilities in Indochina the Associated States would have the right to withdraw from the French Union if they so desired.

M. Bidault said French public and parliamentary opinion would not support the continuation of the war in Indochina if the concept of the French Union were placed in any doubt whatsoever. Therefore, it was essential that the agreement with the Associated States make clear that the latter, by voluntary association, were and would continue to be a part of the French Union.

I said to M. Bidault that under certain circumstances the US Administration was prepared to ask the Congress for powers which would enable us to participate in a united effort to save Southeast Asia. There were, however, two very important considerations which would have to be met if there were to be Congressional approval of the US participating in united action. The first of these considerations was that it be really united action in the sense of participation of the states that had a vital interest in the area, particularly the UK, Australia, New Zealand. The second consideration was that it would have to be clear that this was to preserve real independence for the states in the area and there could be no question that the US was participating in an action which could reasonably be construed as assisting in the perpetuation of colonialism.[3]

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[1] Drafted by MacArthur from the Secretary's verbal report of the conversation.

[2] In a memorandum of Apr. 15, not printed, MacArthur described the letter from General Navarre, French Commander in Indochina, which Bidault showed briefly to both Dulles and MacArthur. Among the points contained in the letter, as described by MacArthur, were the following: New heavy attacks on Dien Bien Phu were to be expected. The fall of Dien Bien Phu, should it occur, should not be portrayed as a great defeat, but rather as the conclusion of an operation which was worth the cost. Also, the Vietnamese were exhibiting a disturbing lack of will. It might not be wise to reach final agreements with the existing government prior to the Geneva Conference. The general recalled his views prior to the fall of Dien Bien Phu in Henri Navarre, *Agonie de l'Indochine* (Paris, Plon, 1956).

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[3] Following their conversations of Apr. 14, Secretary Dulles and Foreign Minister Bidault issued the following communiqué:

"For nearly two centuries it has been the practice for representatives of our two nations to meet together to discuss the grave issues which from time to time have confronted us.

"In pursuance of this custom, which we hope to continue to the benefit of ourselves and others, we have had an exchange of views on Indochina and Southeast Asia.

"Mr. Dulles expressed admiration for the gallant fight of the French Union forces, who continue with unshakeable courage and determination to repel Communist aggression.

"We deplore the fact that on the eve of the Geneva Conference this aggression has reached a new climax in Viet-Nam particularly at Dien Bien Phu and has been renewed in Laos and extended to Cambodia.

"The independence of the three Associated States within the French Union, which new agreements are soon to complete, is at stake in these battles.

"We recognize that the prolongation of the war in Indochina, which endangers the security of the countries immediately affected, also threatens the entire area of Southeast Asia and of the Western Pacific. In close association with other interested nations, we will examine the possibility of establishing, within the framework of the United Nations Charter, a collective defense to assure the peace, security and freedom of this area.

"We recognize that our basic objective at the Geneva Conference will be to seek the re-establishment of a peace in Indochina which will safeguard the freedom of its people and the independence of the Associated States. We are convinced that the possibility of obtaining this objective depends on our solidarity."

The communiqué was issued as Department of State Press Release No. 197 of Apr. 14 and was printed in the Department of State *Bulletin*, Apr. 26, 1954, p. 622.

PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "France"

Memorandum of Conversation[1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET LIMITED DISTRIBUTION

Place: President Laniel's Office in Paris 5:30 p.m., April 14, 1954

Present:	The Secretary	President Laniel
	Ambassador Dillon	Foreign Minister Bidault
	Mr. Douglas MacArthur II	
	Lt. Col. Walters	

. . . .

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[1] Presumably drafted by MacArthur.

The Secretary said he wished to express to President Laniel the admiration of the American people for the courage and the spirit being shown by the forces of France and the French Union in Indochina, and particularly by the defenders of Dien Bien Phu. He had had information to the effect that a particularly good parachute drop of supplies to the defenders had taken place on the previous day. President Laniel said that he had received the same information, and thanked the Secretary for the compliment which he had paid. The Secretary said that he was glad that the aircraft we had been happy to make available, the Dakotas and Flying Boxcars C119's, had been of assistance. He said that he was sure the other Ministers of the Cabinet would tell President Laniel that within the limit of human resources, we had answered every appeal made to us. Mr. Laniel said that he was indeed aware of this fact, and was most grateful. The Secretary said that President Eisenhower himself spoke constantly of this. Recently, at a Cabinet Meeting where the Secretary was to give an exposé on the situation in Indochina, the President, who was himself a General and who understood these things, had taken over the exposé in a masterly fashion and expressed himself in such a way as would have given great satisfaction to President Laniel had he heard it. Laniel nodded his thanks and appreciation.

Mr. Laniel then said he would like to have Mr. Paul Reynaud come in and talk to the Secretary on the subject of Indochina. Mr. Bidault then said that he felt it was more important for the Secretary and President Laniel to talk quietly for a few moments together alone, and Mr. Reynaud could then come in. Everyone then left the room except the Secretary, President Laniel and Colonel Walters. The President and the Secretary then spoke together briefly alone. The Secretary said again that he thought the most important single thing at this time was for the French Government to announce the date of the EDC debate. Mr. Laniel said he agreed and that the announcement would be made tomorrow.

Mr. Reynaud at this point entered the meeting. He said he would like to talk to the Secretary about the meetings with the Vietnamese on the question of the relation between France and Vietnam. He said that the French had promised total independence to the Associated States, and that France would keep its word. They had signed a Treaty with Laos which had given the Laotians full satisfaction. The Secretary said that he had read the Treaty. Mr. Reynaud then said that the Vietnamese wanted two treaties. One would set forth their total absolute independence. On this the French had given them satisfaction. On the second treaty which governed the relations between France and Vietnam, they had asked for an association of free and equal states, but were willing for such an association to have the name of

French Union. But it was by no means the French Union envisaged by the French Constitution in which France had a preponderant voice. In place of the Council of the French Union, the Vietnamese wished to establish a round-table assembly. The French had given them satisfaction on these points, and Mr. Reynaud hoped that the French would never again be regarded as colonialists, and that this would satisfy a certain number of American Senators whom he named. Mr. Reynaud complained about a statement of General O'Daniel that France could and would win the war in Indochina. The French had had a great disappointment in the Vietnamese Army. The Secretary then spoke briefly on the fact that there was no basic difference between the people who made up the Vietnam and Vietminh forces, just as there was no real difference between the peoples of North Korea and South Korea. And there was, therefore, no basic reason why, with proper training and inspiration, the Vietnamese could not have instilled in them the same energy and will to victory which the Viet Minh displayed. Both Reynaud and Laniel said regretfully that what they also needed was a Syngman Rhee, even with the disadvantages that entailed.

Mr. Reynaud then took his leave of the Secretary and the Prime Minister and the meeting came to a close.

751G.00/4–1554

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Day)

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 15, 1954.

Subject: The Secretary's Talks in London and Paris

Participants: Mr. Tran Van Kha, Ambassador of Viet-Nam
Mr. Nong Kimny, Ambassador of Cambodia
Mr. Ourot Souvannavong, Minister of Laos
Mr. Walter S. Robertson
Mr. Henry B. Day
Mr. Robert E. Hoey

The Vietnamese and Cambodian Ambassadors and the Laotian Minister called at Mr. Robertson's suggestion. Mr. Robertson said he wished to tell them briefly about the Secretary's talks in London and Paris. The results of the talks had been fully set forth in the communiqués issued in Paris and London but he had thought that the representatives of the Associated States might wish to ask him some questions or that there might be some points on which they would like further comment.

Mr. Robertson said that the Secretary's trip had been an arduous one but very successful and that he had found in both London and Paris full agreement on the importance of a common position and the desirability of united action.

The Ambassador of Cambodia asked a question in two parts: first, what specific measures, if any, for meeting the danger were contemplated, secondly, the nature of commitments which the countries agreeing to the united action would be expected to make. Mr. Robertson replied that there was full agreement on the danger, that there was a potentially dangerous situation and that it was desirable to build up sufficient strength to counter the danger. Communist aid to the Viet Minh was being furnished on an increasing scale. It was hoped that by building up this strength the Communists would come to the conclusion that they had nothing to gain. United action would thus prevent extension of the Communist threat. As to the specific commitments envisaged, the word alliance was too strong. It had been agreed that it was desirable to explore the possibilities of an organization in which each country would agree to concert its action with the others in a manner somewhat similar to NATO. The United States could not undertake the responsibility alone. One thing that was fully agreed upon was that there must be no taint of colonialism. It was basic to the concept that it be a free association.

Mr. Robertson said that it had further been agreed that examination of the possibilities of united action should be undertaken now and not postponed until after Geneva. He said that the Secretary of State hoped to meet the representatives of the other nine countries on Tuesday, April 20th, for consultation on this matter.

Mr. Robertson mentioned how weary of the war the French people had become and the possibility that this might lead the French into making concessions at Geneva in order to assure a peaceful settlement. We could not tell what might happen but it seems certain that unity of defensive purpose would be a great encouragement to France.

The Ambassador of Cambodia inquired whether the matter of invitations to the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference had been discussed. Mr. Robertson explained that the invitations would be issued by the four powers which had agreed to hold the conference and that it might not be possible for them to complete their consultations before the Geneva Conference opened so that it was quite likely that the invitations would not be issued until after the opening. Mr. Robertson mentioned that the U.S. Government of course fully appreciated the great interest which the Associated States had in this phase of the conference.

The Ambassador of Viet-Nam asked if any public declaration was anticipated or whether the process would simply entail consultations among the governments. Mr. Robertson said that consultations would take place. Presumably there would be some publicity as the fact of the talks would become known. The Vietnamese Ambassador further inquired whether the Secretary had seen Bao Dai in Paris. Mr. Robertson explained that unfortunately Bao Dai had not reached Paris before the Secretary's departure. The Vietnamese Ambassador thought this was most unfortunate.[1]

The Laotian Minister said he understood that the Secretary had made much of the importance of full independence for the Associated States. He expressed pleasure that the Secretary had taken this position.

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[1] On Apr. 14, Secretary Dulles sent the following message to Bao Dai in Paris: "I am sorry to have missed an opportunity to meet Your Majesty during my short visit here. Mr Bidault has told me that the conclusion of your negotiations with the French Government on a treaty of association with the Republic of France is imminent. This news will be well received in the United States and should facilitate our task in obtaining support for Your Majesty's Government in your struggle to preserve the independence of Vietnam in the face of the Viet Minh Communist aggression." The text of this communication was transmitted to Washington in telegram 3892 from Paris, Apr. 14. (751G.11/4–1454)

751G.5/4–1654 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Sturm) to the Department of State

SECRET HANOI, April 16, 1954—3 p. m.

591. Repeated information Saigon 495, Paris 267. Limit distribution. In farewell call[1] I paid him yesterday, General Cogny reviewed once more, but with unwonted bluntness, his differences with General Navarre, particularly regarding conduct of Battle of Dien-Bien-Phu.

Cogny said Viet Minh had planned, and were executing their operation at Dien-Bien-Phu with shrewd attention to all its strategic aspects. He remarked that earlier Viet Minh incursion into north Laos and feint toward Luang Prabang were designed to clear out any French Union units which might threaten their rear when they chose to attack Dien-Bien-Phu. Present "battle of the Hanoi–Haiphong road and railway" is an integral part of the battle of Dien-Bien-Phu, as is generalized upsurge of guerrilla activity throughout delta. Every present enemy action is designed to impede French Union resistance at Dien-Bien-Phu, or else to divert or pin down troops whose efforts otherwise might be brought to bear, directly or indirectly, on Viet Minh Corps de Bataille now engaged at Dien-Bien-Phu.

French Union Forces, on the contrary, are limited to reacting to military situations created by the enemy initiative, Cogny continued. French response to Dien-Bien-Phu is purely tactical, and High Command has made no effort to call into play those strategic factors, admittedly few in number but still capable of paying dividends, which to some degree it still controls. The two groupes mobiles now engaged in operation "Atlante" should be sent here and employed in lightning raids on Viet Minh bases at, for example, Tuyen-Quang and Yen-Bay. These points are now stripped of defenses and vulnerable to attack and lie across still important Viet Minh supply route from China. Without going into details, Cogny indicated his conviction that attacks such as these and others, could be expected to relieve enemy pressure at Dien-Bien-Phu.

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[1] Sturm was succeeded at Hanoi by Turner Cameron.

While ground forces at Dien-Bien-Phu have been "magnificent", fact remains that battle is being fought by Air Force. French have been negligent in providing air support in this area.

When they beseech US to make more planes available, and receive satisfaction, they find themselves short of pilots and hampered by an inadequate infrastructure. A satisfactory air force establishment could radically change present relative positions at Dien-Bien-Phu in favor French Union Forces.

Cogny said he is not certain that a third major assault will be made by Viet Minh before Geneva conference. While a victory over French Forces would enormously enhance their prestige, crushing defeat would be so embarrassing that enemy may not choose to take the risk, and may content himself for time being with attempting to "asphyxiate" French garrison.

General Cogny is confident of the high quality of his men at Dien-Bien-Phu, and feels that they will be able to hold out against a third (and possibly a fourth) major enemy attack, but the long range prospect troubles him.

Cogny remains convinced that French High Command should never have accepted battle in remote jungle of Thai country, for at Dien-Bien-Phu the seven year battle for the Red River delta might very well be lost.

STURM

751G.00/4–1654 : Telegram

The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 16, 1954—7 p. m.

2022. Repeated information Paris 665, Hanoi 373. I took General O'Daniel to call on Buu Loc yesterday.

Buu Loc said that Vietnamese Government was not opposed in principle to proposed conference in Geneva or to any discussion of peaceful solution to present war but it was adamant that there must be no cession or division of Vietnamese territory and it could not accept any solution of "mixed government" wherein, say, Viet Minh would have portfolios of interior, education, and defense; that would be followed very quickly by Communist absorption of Vietnam as it was classic Communist trick, the way they had taken Czechoslovakia. In any case, however, Vietnamese Government could not consider participating in Geneva conference until their negotiations with France, which had already dragged on abnormally, were completed with independence of Vietnam clearly established and association with France and French Union equally clearly established. Those negotiations should and could be brought to satisfactory conclusion before conference at Geneva ended. His personal attitude remained the same. He would not continue to preside a government which would send a delegation to conference wherein Viet Minh would be seated on terms of equality with Vietnamese delegation thereby giving former *de facto* recognition.

In conclusion he said he regretted O'Daniel arrived at time when Vietnamese Government for moment could not carry on its plans for more aggressive conduct of war because majority of cabinet members were held in Paris by important but interminable discussions with French. War cabinet could not get going because both Ninh [*Hinh*] and Defense Minister Quat were now in Paris. He expected both of them, however, to return next week.

HEATH

751G.00/4–1654 : Circular telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Offices [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, April 16, 1954—7:11 p. m.

368. In discussing Secretary's trip to London and Paris with officials of govt to which you are accredited, you should base your discussion on communiqués issued London and Paris which have been sent you separately thru USIA wireless file.

As both communiqués indicate, there was full exchange of views re importance of security of Southeast Asia to UK, France, US, and other friendly govts whose vital security interests, freedom, and independence are directly involved. There was large measure of acceptance by both British and French of our view that danger was such that there was necessity for united will now so that if need arose we could immediately take united action and that without loss of time we should informally consult with other like-minded nations as to what best could be done. British and French agreed with our suggestion that informal working group should be established in Washington to exchange views and develop means of expressing united will of participants that Southeast Asia would not be permitted to fall to Communists.

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[1] Drafted by MacArthur and Merchant. Sent to Embassies in London, Paris, Canberra, Wellington, Bangkok, Manila, and Saigon (to be passed to Phnom Penh and Vientiane). Repeated for information to Karachi, New Delhi, Colombo, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo, Rangoon, Djakarta, and The Hague, and to Ottawa by pouch.

Both British and French are obviously reluctant to formalize any arrangements which might be construed as taking final action prior to full discussion of Indochina at Geneva. However it is clear that as result Secretary's trip there now exists an understanding of need for unity of purpose among three powers acting with other interested countries, and this fact should strengthen position of free nations at Geneva Conference.

British are thinking primarily in terms of NATO form of pact for Southeast Asia but as result of Secretary's visit they now realize negotiation and ratification of any such arrangement might require months. If situation should deteriorate in near future, British concept of NATO-type pact as point of departure for united action would obviously not meet exigencies of situation. French views less advanced and colored by desire avoid any action giving public impression Geneva has been prejudged as failure. French affirmed intention proceed with completion independence Associated States but clearly assume their continuing association with France on basis of their free choice.

Following his return to Washington April 19[*17*] and prior his departure for Paris night of April 20 Secretary will see following Ambassadors together to outline briefly to them results his recent trip and suggest establishment informal working group: UK, France, Associated States, Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand.

In summary, Secretary's trip resulted in extremely useful exchange of views. He rectified misunderstandings which had arisen through press speculation that we envisaged issuing some form joint ultimatum to Communist China. This was never our concept. What we had in mind was possibility of issuing prior to Geneva some form of declaration of common purpose showing determination of signatories not to permit Communist domination Southeast Asia and also providing for some form *ad hoc* consultative machinery which would enable common action to be taken should this become necessary, pending development of more formalized collective self-defense arrangement within framework Article 51 of UN Charter. While time will probably not permit taking definitive action along these lines before Geneva, we believe substantial progress already made as indicated by London and Paris communiqués and statements by other govts concerned. With this as start we hope further consultations among interested govts will result in early progress on best means implementing united action concept.

SMITH

751G.00/4–1654 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Pakistan[1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, April 16, 1954—7 : 27 p. m.

888. Department increasingly concerned lest Colombo Prime Ministers conference[2] take course stimulated by Nehru counter to objectives we seek at Geneva Conference. Colombo meeting could present effective sounding board for Nehru appeal to all free Asian nations to avoid association with collective arrangement such as that being supported by US re Indochina. Nehru undoubtedly also will emphasize colonial aspect Indochina struggle. Hope phrasing any official communiqué will not undercut our efforts Geneva.

In view our concern Secretary called in Pakistan and Ceylon Ambassadors to outline our thinking on Indochina (Deptel 867 to Karachi and 284 to Colombo).[3] Request you call on Prime Minister and support Secretary's approach in similar vein especially with regard to importance of assurances of independence Associated States. Additionally your representation should spell out dangerous consequences Commie control Indochina. First, Soviet and Chinese spokesmen make it clear Commie purpose after Indochina is to dominate all Southeast Asia. Second, such control would deny to free nations from Subcontinent to Japan tremendous Southeast Asia rice resources as well as important quantities tin, oil, rubber and iron ore. Third, well developed sea and air routes and bases in Southeast Asia in communist hands would constitute grave immediate threat to India, Ceylon and Pakistan on one hand and Philippines, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand on the other. President Eisenhower defined Southeast Asian area as one of "transcendent importance."

You may say we hope Prime Minister can see way clear to use his good offices and influence at Colombo to drive home (1) scope of danger in Southeast Asia and (2) fact that US plan for united action is based on explicit assurances by French regarding independence three Indochina States.[4]

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[1] Drafted by Lee E. Metcalf, Acting Officer in Charge, Pakistan–Afghanistan Affairs. Also sent to Colombo as telegram 295; repeated for information to New Delhi, London, and Paris.

[2] A conference of the Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, and Ceylon was held at Colombo from Apr. 28 to May 2; a wide range of Asian and world problems was discussed. For the final communiqué of the conference, see Denise Folliot, ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1954*, Royal Institute of International Affairs (London, Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 166–169.

[3] Telegram 867 to Karachi, Apr. 9, not printed, summarized the discussion between Secretary Dulles and Ambassador Amjad Ali of Pakistan. (751G.00/4–954) Telegram 284 to Colombo, Apr. 9, not printed, summarized Dulles' meeting with R. S. S. Gunewardene, Ambassador of Ceylon, on the same day. (751G.00/4–954) For documentation on these meetings, see volume XII.

[4] Telegram 853 from Karachi, Apr. 20, read as follows: "Prime Minister assured full cooperation." (751G.00/4–2054)

For New Delhi. In his discretion Ambassador may wish to emphasize to Pillai position re independence Associated States.

SMITH

751G.00/4–954

The Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (Key) to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Lodge)[1]

TOP SECRET [WASHINGTON,] April 16, 1954.

DEAR CABOT: In response to your telegram 603 of April 9,[2] I should like to give you some of our thinking regarding the role of the United Nations in what has come to be known as "united action" with respect to Indochina. Our thinking regarding the United Nations aspects is entirely exploratory. You will understand that any conclusions are of necessity contingent upon decisions on our general policy in South East Asia. This means that even at this time I am in no position to give you more than a few ideas indicating the direction of our thinking.

Our general objective which the Secretary has been discussing with our allies is the formation of a collective defense association within the framework of the United Nations Charter. This association would be based on the determination of the participants to prevent the spread of the Soviet and Chinese Communist system to South East Asia and to assure peace and security in the area.

The negotiation for such a collective defense arrangement would not require reference to the United Nations.

In the event that the collective defense group should decide at some future date that military action is necessary to save Indochina, the United Nations undoubtedly would come into the picture in one form or another. Two alternative courses of action might be considered:

1. Prior to any military action the countries concerned might invoke the Uniting for Peace Resolution procedure in the Security Council in order to obtain a recommendation that all members support such action. Of course, we would be faced with the Soviet vote in the Security Council which would necessitate action in the General Assembly. The problem would be to obtain the necessary support for a satisfactory resolution without such a delay as would defeat our purpose in Indochina.
2. Another possibility would be for the collective defense group to take military action in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter and simultaneously report such action to the Security Council as provided

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[1] Drafted by Eric Stein of UNP.

[2] Telegram 603 from New York, Apr. 9, read as follows: "Re Indochina. Would appreciate any information Department can give me on UN aspects of united action re Indochina and being kept informed in regard thereto." (751G.00/4–954)

in that Article. We might then initiate United Nations action under the Uniting for Peace Resolution with the idea of obtaining broadest possible support and additional contributions for the action in Indochina. We might also ask for observation teams to go to Indochina.

Viewing the problem hypothetically the second alternative would appear more advantageous but any decision on the precise type of action in the United Nations would obviously depend upon the circumstances.

We are aware of the possibility that some other government might raise the Indochina situation in the United Nations whether we do or not.

I am attaching a staff study on the various possibilities for United Nations action which might be of some interest to you.[3] I shall keep you informed of further developments.

Sincerely yours, DAVID MCK. KEY

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[3] The staff study is not printed.

751G.5/4–1754

Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to the Secretary of State

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 17, 1954.

You will have seen from Saturday's[1] papers that a high Government official was credited with a statement that the U.S. should send troops into Indochina if the French withdrew. The speaker was the Vice President and the audience was the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The speech and the question and answers which followed were off the record but the confidence was broken by someone.[2]

Tickers from London and Paris attributed the remarks to the Vice President.[3]

Sherman Adams called General Smith on this this morning. As a result, the General talked to the Vice President and suggested that we put out a brief interpretative statement. He then sent me up to work out such a statement with the Vice President, a copy of which is attached. The plan is for the Department to issue it this afternoon. We will send copies to the White House for Sherman Adams and for transmission to Jim Hagerty in Augusta.[4] It will also be telegraphed to interested posts.

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[1] Apr. 17.

[2] The speech was reported in the *New York Times* of Apr. 17, 1954. The *New York Times* of Apr. 18 contained a digest of the comments by the Vice President. No text of the speech has been found. For Nixon's account, see *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, pp. 152–153.

[3] Telegram 3944 from Paris, Apr. 19, read as follows: "Press Paris has thus far tended to treat Nixon statement Indochina April 16 as representing only a more explicit definition of policy already outlined by US Government to effect if situation deteriorates Indochina, US would not hesitate intervene with troops. Press generally tends cast statement on troop intervention in latter vein rather than in terms hypothesis if France should decide to withdraw from Indochina. So far, non-Communist press reaction tends treat this as nothing more than it thought US had already indicated that it was prepared to do if military situation Indochina worsened." (751G.00/4–1954)

[Annex]

Draft State Department Press Release[5]

[WASHINGTON,] April 17, 1954.

Certain remarks with regard to U.S. policy toward Indo-China have been attributed to a high government official. The contents of the speech referred to and questions and answers which followed were off-the-record but a complete report of the speech has been made available to the State Department.

The speech enunciated no new United States policy with regard to Indo-China. It expressed full agreement with and support for the policy with respect to Indo-China previously enunciated by the President and the Secretary of State.

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[4] Press Secretary Hagerty was with the President who was vacationing at Augusta, Georgia. Hagerty's diary entry for Apr. 17 read in part as follows: "Talked to President in the morning about Nixon speech, and he asked me to get in touch with Bedell Smith and have State Department put out statement on hypothetical question without cutting ground from under Nixon. . . . State Department called me while at dinner and read text of statement which in effect pointed out that Nixon was answering hypothetical question but that United States never expected French to pull out of Indochina. They issued their statement Saturday night for Sunday morning papers." (Eisenhower Library, James C. Hagerty papers)

On the afternoon of Apr. 19, Secretary Dulles talked to the Vice President by telephone. The record of their conversation read in part as follows: "The VP returned the Sec.'s call. The Sec. said he saw he got his name in the paper, and the VP said he did not intend to. . . . Nixon said in his speech he endorsed everything the Sec. had done, but that didn't make the headlines. The Sec. said he told newsmen in Augusta that it was an off-the-record reply to a hypothetical question, and the Sec. said he did not care to answer it himself. He said the President was not disturbed. Nixon said he did not want to upset what the Sec. was doing. The Sec. said the result might be on the plus side, and referred to (Nixon made the reference) to the reaction in the French papers. He said the editors themselves as an audience reacted very favorably. . . . Nixon referred again to his statement and said the purpose of his answer was to say if the only way to hold Indochina was to go in, we might have to." (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations")

In discussing the Nixon speech later the same day with Senator H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, Secretary Dulles is recorded as saying that he was strongly opposed to getting American soldiers bogged down in Asia, that there were other things that could be done that were better. The incident of the Nixon speech was unfortunate, but would blow over. (Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, "Telephone Conversations")

[5] This statement was delivered to correspondents by Jameson Parker, Department of State Press Officer, on Apr. 17. The text was printed in the Department of State *Bulletin* of Apr. 26, 1954, pp. 623–624. The text published in the *Bulletin* was identical to the version printed here except for minor drafting changes and the bracketed insertion of "Vice President Nixon" at the end of the first sentence, indicating that he was the official under reference.

That policy was authoritatively set forth by the Secretary of State in his speech of March 29, 1954, in which he said: "Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted, but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now, if we dare not be resolute today."

In regard to a hypothetical question as to whether United States forces should be sent to Indo-China in the event of French withdrawal, the high government official categorically rejected the premise of possible French withdrawal. Insofar as the use of U.S. forces in Indo-China was concerned, he was stating a course of possible action which he was personally prepared to support under a highly unlikely hypothesis.

The answer to the question correctly emphasized the fact that the interests of the United States and other free nations are vitally involved with the interests of France and the Associated States in resisting Communist domination of Indo-China.

751G.00/4–1854 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET SAIGON, April 18, 1954—9 a. m.

2039. Repeated information Paris 676, Tokyo 79, Manila 205, Singapore 65. Situation at Dien-Bien-Phu has considerably worsened. In addition to two trenches cut across southern portion airstrip at Huguette, two French battalions holding position six in that position are now cut off from remainder Huguette. In fact, Viet Minh has infiltrated Huguette to such an extent that they now bifurcate it even in daytime.

Former drop zone for resupply therefor has become almost nonexistent. Although our air experts (including General Partridge)[1] feel it might still be possible to carry out pinpoint parachute drops, French feel this beyond their capabilities and as result are forced to rely on daily supply columns moving to position six which means heavy drain in casualties. Daily casualty rate is now between 40 and 60, and thus problem of evacuation of wounded grows constantly more serious. We concur in Hanoi estimate that no reason for General Giap to show clemency and that on contrary renewed appeals for evacuation of wounded will only serve to fortify his estimate Castries' situation is critical.

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[1] Gen. Earle E. Partridge, USAF, Commander, U.S. Far East Air Forces, was on visit in Indochina. On Apr. 17, he held a conversation with Ambassador Heath and General O'Daniel, during which he stressed the inadequacy of the resources available to the French Air Force in Indochina. Telegram 2038 from Saigon, Apr. 18, which reported the conversation, read in part as follows: "General Partridge, without speculating as to policy implications, said that it would be possible to establish modern airfields at critical points capable of taking jet aircraft in a period of six months. He thought that with sufficient air capability supply line

Yesterday in fierce fighting Viet Minh took position five in "Dominique". This means that all of this position except position three is now in enemy hands.

Last night De Jean told me that four French Union battalions (made up largely of Laotian troops) have sortied from Muong Say and are now within 25 kilometers of Dien-Bien-Phu. He deemed doubtful, however, whether this desperate feint would serve to release pressures presently building up against beleaguered garrison.

McClintock

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from China could be partially interdicted and that by using modern techniques Viet Minh could be made to feel what real air power is. However, if it were thought by French that American personnel and equipment should be used in such an endeavor command should remain in US hands and not under a French air general. He thought that task force concept with US commander retaining autonomy over his own bases, personnel and weapons would be best solution if, in fact, such a call were made and US policy dictated an affirmative response." (751G.00/4-1854)

396.1 GE/4-1854

Memorandum of Conversations, by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)

SECRET [Washington,] April 18, 1954.

Participants: The Secretary
The Under Secretary
Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador
Mr. Merchant—EUR

(Sir Roger Makins had called on the Acting Secretary this morning to show him a telegram from Mr. Eden which said in effect that the British would not participate in the scheduled meeting of Ten on Indochina called for noon on Tuesday with the Secretary,[1] Mr. Eden's telegram said that there had been no understanding on his part that a working group would go forward at once on the subject of collective defense arrangements in Southeast Asia and that there had been no agreement between the Secretary and himself on the membership. The Acting Secretary expressed to the Ambassador his amazement at this message and the fact that from our records agreement on the first point was completely clear in London although apparently nothing had been decided definitively on the ultimate membership of the group.)

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[1] For Eden's recollection of the circumstances surrounding the meeting of Tuesday, Apr. 20, including an extract from his instructions to Makins, see *Full Circle*, pp. 108–111.

The British Ambassador called on the Secretary this afternoon at the latter's request at his residence. After referring to Mr. Eden's message and his own clear understanding of the points of agreement, the Secretary said that rather than looking to the past we should concentrate on what we do about the meeting of Ambassadors already called for Tuesday. He said he thought it undesirable to call it off since this would create considerable excitement. It seemed to him that there were two alternatives. One would be to broaden the list of participants by inviting the Ambassadors of Burma, Indonesia, Canada, and possibly even India. The character of the meeting could be changed somewhat to consist of a briefing by the Secretary of the development of his thinking and the results of his trip to Europe. The second alternative would be to break the nine Ambassadors up into two or three groups. This, however, would be almost impossible to do in light of his own schedule and if the briefings were to be shared even with the Under Secretary some question might arise as to why particular Ambassadors were in one group and not in the other.

The question of inviting the Dutch Ambassador was discussed and dismissed as likely to create further difficulties in the area on the "colonial" problem.

The suggestion was then made that the Tuesday meeting be transformed into a meeting of the Sixteen to whom would be added the Ambassadors of the three Associated States (this would cover the membership of the Nine originally invited for Tuesday.) At this meeting the Secretary could make a report and discuss the Geneva conference in general terms.

Sir Roger Makins thereupon promised to put up this latter suggestion to London and the alternative one of keeping the Tuesday meeting but broadening its membership. He promised to have an answer Monday morning.[2]

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[2] In a letter of Apr. 19, Ambassador Makins informed Under Secretary Smith that Foreign Secretary Eden agreed to the proposal that the meeting of Apr. 20 consist of a discussion of the Geneva Conference in general terms by the Secretary of State. For the letter of Apr. 19 and the record of the meeting of Apr. 20, see vol. XVI, pp. 534 and 535.

Editorial Note

On April 19, 1954, discussion of the situation in Indochina occurred in the United States Senate. Participants included the following: Ralph E. Flanders of Vermont, Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado, Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota, Wayne Morse of Oregon, Herbert H. Lehman of New York, Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, and George A. Smathers of Florida. The remarks of the Senators reflected heightened concern regarding the possibility of American intervention, particularly in light of the speech by Vice President Nixon to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16. For the record of the discussion, see the *Congressional Record*, April 19, 1954, pages 5281, 5289–5294, and 5297–5298.

Editorial Note

On the evening of April 20, 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles departed from Washington for Europe to participate in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council held at Paris on April 23 and in the Geneva Conference which convened on April 26. The log of the Secretary's daily appointments indicates that prior to his departure, Dulles engaged in a full day of meetings devoted largely to the Geneva Conference and Indochina. (Dulles papers, "Daily Appointments")

At 9 a. m., Dulles briefed a delegation of Congressional leaders at the Department of State regarding Indochina, the Geneva Conference, and the question of united action in Southeast Asia. In anticipation of this session, he received briefing memoranda from Thruston B. Morton, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, April 16 (751G.5/4–1654), and from U. Alexis Johnson, Department coordinator for preparations for the Geneva Conference, April 17. (751G.5/4–1754) No record of the meeting itself has been found.

At noon, the Secretary met with the Ambassadors of 20 nations to discuss aspects of the Geneva Conference. Regarding that meeting, see memorandum of conversations, page 1349. For the record of the session, see volume XVI, page 535. Dulles next had lunch with Charles E. Wilson, the Secretary of Defense, and Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Secretary Dulles devoted the afternoon to additional meetings with State Department officials.

Before his evening departure, Secretary Dulles issued a statement regarding the Geneva Conference (Department of State Press Release No. 207); for text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 3, 1954, page 669.

751G.5/4–2154 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, April 21, 1954—10 a. m.

3972. Repeated information Saigon 458. Marc Jacquet, Secretary of State for Relations with Associated States, took occasion of call by Ambassador Heath [1] to deliver himself of impassioned review of Indochina scene, highlights of which follow:

1. Indochina question is now uppermost in Frenchman's mind having replaced EDC.

2. No single French military authority remains including General Ely, who still holds out hope for victory in IC without foreign military intervention on behalf French Union.

3. For moment Geneva is center of French hopes and until it fails public mind is not receptive to suggestion of US intervention.

4. Jacquet expects Geneva to fail as do his colleagues.

5. Ministerial group within Cabinet supporting decision adhere to present Laniel Indochina policy (i.e., prosecute war until peace can be negotiated on honorable terms) consists of Bidault, Pleven, Laniel and Jacquet. Reynaud in special category of favoring negotiations on less stringent terms.

6. This group on thinner and thinner ground. They committing political suicide in sponsoring policies in face unpopularity of war.

7. Notwithstanding knowledge this fact they willing continue take risk even after Geneva fails if prospect eventual victory in Indochina exists, which does not now.

8. Only means provide this prospect is through US intervention.

Should take form US naval and air participation. If it did, French public opinion trend toward withdrawal would be reversed and would then favor continuation France's effort in form ground forces (supported US naval and air forces).

9. Statement of US intervention must be forthcoming as soon as IC phase Geneva breaks down.

10. US decision, disapproving "Radford plan for intervention of 300 US planes" came as a great shock and disappointment to Cabinet.

11. Jacquet and Maurice Schumann expect to alternate as head French delegation Geneva after Bidault leaves. Reynaud no longer considered in running because policies conflict with those of Bidault and others and rank of Vice Premier would cause difficulties with others.

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[1] Ambassador Heath was in Paris for discussions with U.S. and French officials. Heath had been designated a member of the U.S. Delegation to the Geneva Conference, which opened on Apr. 26.

12. Re Viet-nam participation at Geneva he thought highly of the Chauvel plan accord Associated States and Viet Minh special position. They would sit at "small tables" and be brought into discussions at big table as presence was required but never both Viet Minh and Associated States at same time. Would neither be observers nor full participants. Chauvel plan would solve dilemma of having States present without Viet Minh. Full Viet Minh participation would be disastrous for the Viet-nam government as regards public opinion at home.[2]

13. Franco-Vietnamese negotiations would be concluded this afternoon on mutually satisfactory basis. They provide for two conventions requested by Vietnamese and revisions of French constitution required (presumably a reduction of the authority of the High Council of the French Union.) Treaties would not be signed immediately for it is wished to have signature coincide with that of other conventions to be concluded.[3]

14. Bao Dai arriving Paris tomorrow. Will consult with Bidault and Jacquet on Geneva and will presumably set forth position on Viet-nam participation.

15. There was no question of change of French policy vis-à-vis Bao Dai who more essential to their purposes now than ever.

16. URAS (Jacquet's party) declined resign or overthrow government last week because they did not wish be accused having done so just before Geneva conference. If Laniel government were overthrown beforehand Geneva would be "disaster" from French standpoint.

17. Chances for survival of Laniel government poor for URAS and other dissident Cabinet Ministers could exercise power overthrow government at any time they choose after Assembly reconvenes. Government will probably be overthrown on EDC and not on Indochina issue. Fate of Dien-Bien-Phu would affect these events only slightly, but results at Geneva during the first week of conference, prior to reconvening of the Assembly, will have strong bearing.

18. Within Cabinet group supporting Laniel in present "continue the war" policy in Indochina, Pleven is now growing lukewarm, while Laniel, Bidault and Jacquet hold their ground.

If URAS resigns from government and whether or not it is overthrown as result, Jacquet will be obliged to follow his group in resigning.

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[2] For documentation on the issue of participation at the Geneva Conference, see vol. XVI, pp. 414 ff.

[3] On Apr. 28, France and the State of Vietnam issued a joint declaration at Paris affirming their agreement to regulate their mutual relations on the basis of two treaties, one providing for total independence for Vietnam, the other defining the terms of their association within the French Union. For text, see *L'Année Politique, 1954*, p. 569; for a translation, see Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, vol. I, p. 245. The treaties were not initialed until June and were never ratified.

Jacquet loaned us recent report on military prospects in Indochina which is intended only for circulation within French Government. Résumé being cabled separately.[4]

Significant that "united action" was never mentioned during conversations, all references to possible future outside military participation in Indochina conflict being to US.

DILLON

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[4] *Infra.*

751G.5/4–2154 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, April 21, 1954—5 p. m.

3986. Repeated information Saigon 462. Limit distribution. Following is summary paper on military situation Indochina given Embassy to read April 20 by Jacquet:[1]

Although on March 1, French command Indochina retained freedom of action, in containing peripheral initiatives Viet Minh, necessary to acknowledge (*a*) deterioration (pourissement) in Tonkin delta where French Union forces cannot oppose Viet Minh control over greater part delta; (*b*) deterioration (pourissement) in Kontum and Pleiku plateau regions; and (*c*) worsening in general situation Cochin China due political rivalries between confessional sects and Vietnamese Government. In view proximity rains making large-scale maneuvers impossible and Geneva conference, Viet Minh has directed ¾ its battle corps (i.e., 40 its best battalions and almost all its artillery division) against Dien Bien Phu with view regaining freedom action for its battle corps by elimination French Union forces there.

1. Fall Dien Bien Phu will have serious military, psychological and political consequences.

(*a*) On military plane, fall Dien Bien Phu means loss to expeditionary corps of 15 Franco–Vietnamese battalions, and these battalions among best troops Indochina—parachutists, legionnaires, North Africans. Prestige that would be gained by Viet Minh as result victory would minimize implication Viet Minh losses which are important by virtue their number (Viet Minh losses totalled 12000 on April 4) and because they involve best units Viet Minh battle corps. It is likely that if victorious Viet Minh would be able to reconstitute its battle corps without difficulty for next campaign.

(*b*) Re psychological consequences, possible that morale our expeditionary corps be affected and cohesion and development national armies Associated States would be compromised. Probably that extension deterioration (pourissement) in depth in Tonkin delta and on surface in Laos would be amplified in such way that military operations adversary would be greatly facilitated.

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[1] See telegram 3972 from Paris, Apr. 21, *supra*.

(*c*) On local political plane it would be more difficult still to expect a rallying of forces of country around Vietnamese Government, and additionally, military success Viet Minh would surely be exploited Geneva. However, necessary note that resistance by defenders Dien Bien Phu would diminish in part serious consequences and eventual fall that point.

2. If Franco–Vietnamese victory Dien Bien Phu, consequences different.

(*a*) Viet Minh will have great difficulties in reconstituting its battle corps.

(*b*) Psychological repercussions in Tonkin and Laos would favor Franco–Vietnamese, "attentistes" would range themselves more willingly on side Bao Dai Government; and France will possess more effective means press Vietnamese Government to intensify its war effort.

(*c*) On general political plane, France and Associated States would be able present themselves at Geneva with proof Viet Minh military operations not paying off.

3. Regardless outcome battle, necessary France make up losses but this effort will depend on one hand on development and value armies Associated States and on other on increase in assistance China is in position furnish Viet Minh. Re development armies. Associated States, which conditions execution Navarre plan, certain difficulties have arisen. Vietnamese Government has shown a lack of authority and will in taking necessary war measures, and those it has taken have remained "dead letter". French Government has decided recently confront Vietnamese Government with its responsibilities as to war effort and Prime Minister has addressed to Buu Loc letter informing him that if Vietnamese Government did not keep its engagements French Government would be obliged reconsider its position.[2] As for Chinese matériel aid Viet Minh, this has developed considerably since November 1953 "we are certain that, in addition war matériel furnished, some Chinese advisers exist at all levels Viet Minh command to regimental level and that batteries ORDA-directed artillery (DCA) in action at Dien Bien Phu have been engaged by their Chinese artillerymen". All this leads supposition that it is necessary prepare face next October large Viet Minh units equipped with organic artillery, anti-aircraft equipment superior to that at present, and possibility of aerial intervention by adversary.

4. Re French effort, Government has taken initiative sending at once two battalions parachutists and of preparing mobile group and

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[2] Regarding the communication under reference, see telegram 1944 from Saigon, Apr. 9, p. 1295.

armored unit (groupement blinde) which will be available soon. (Re latter, annex to paper states decision in principle to prepare movement within three months one mobile group of three battalions; three squadrons tanks; and one squadron armored reconnaissance cars.) But it is likely this effort will not suffice and that it will be necessary to study in what measure the expeditionary corps ought to be reinforced in order permit high command carry out mission. The nature and [*of*] this effort cannot be calculated before end present campaign; however, it appears necessary look toward air reinforcement not only with view giving maximum mobility strategic reserves but to face any eventual aerial intervention by adversary.

DILLON

751H.00/4–2154

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (Key) [1]

CONFIDENTIAL [WASHINGTON,] April 21, 1954.

Subject: Cambodian Complaint to the UN.

Participants: Ambassador Nong Kimny of Cambodia
Mr. Key, Assistant Secretary, UNA
Miss Bacon, FE
Mr. Stein, UNP

In response to Ambassador Nong's request for our advice on the proposed Cambodian complaint to the UN, I called him in to give him the views of the Secretary.

I said that in the Secretary's view there is a paramount need to preserve the unity of the free nations at the Geneva Conference and that any steps which might cause a strain on this unity should be avoided. Accordingly, the Secretary thought that the Cambodian Government could profitably submit a general appeal to the UN focusing world attention upon the invasion of his country without, however, requesting any specific UN action at this time. I added that this general appeal would be without prejudice to whatever future action the Cambodian Government may request from the UN in the light of developments and particularly in the light of the developments in Geneva. I suggested that a communication setting forth in detail the aggression against Cambodia might be directed to the Secretary General with a request that he communicate it to all UN Members and with a specific reservation of the right to request further action at some future date.

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[1] Drafted by Eric Stein of UNP on Apr. 22.

The Ambassador indicated that his government has decided to make every effort to deal with the situation without friendly assistance from abroad and that the Secretary's suggestion might well fit into this context; he realized that while no UN action would take place, the general appeal would lay a foundation for a further request for such action if future developments would warrant it and he saw an advantage in that. He said that his present instructions give him some flexibility and he would like to think over night what he should do and what recommendation he should make to his government. He indicated definite interest in the Secretary's suggestion and thought that his government might view it favorably.

He added that he could not see that the Cambodian position would suffer if no action is requested in the UN in view of the fact that only five days remain before the opening of the Geneva Conference and only a "few weeks" before the collective defense for South East Asia is organized. He wondered whether precedents exist for the suggested general communication and was answered in the affirmative. He asked for our assistance in drafting the communication and I assured him of our readiness to help.[2]

David McK. Key

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[2] Cambodia had in fact already released a general communication of the type here suggested. On Apr. 14, the Cambodian Government had issued an appeal to the world and to the United Nations protesting Viet Minh attacks on Cambodia. The appeal called the situation to the attention of the conscience of the world but did not request any specific action by the United Nations or individual countries. The Cambodian appeal is summarized in telegram 2033 from Saigon, Apr. 17 (751H.13/4-1754); a translation of the text is contained in telegram 2069 from Saigon, Apr. 23 (751H.00/4-2354).

Editorial Note

Charles E. Wilson, the Secretary of Defense, made the following announcement at his news conference of April 21, 1954:

> "At the request of the French Government, the United States Air Force has undertaken to airlift certain French Union personnel to Indochina. Upon arrival in Indochina, the planes will land at airfields outside the zone of combat. The planes then will return to their regular stations.
>
> "This is in line with present U.S. policy and in conformity with our existing military assistance program." (Department of Defense Press Release No. 355-54, April 21, 1954; Department of Defense files)

The operation was carried out in late April and early May. Documentation on negotiations for overflight and landing rights and on other aspects of the airlift is in files 751G.00 and 751.551.

751G.5/4–2154 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

SECRET PARIS, April 21, 1954—8 p. m.

4003. Repeated information Saigon 465. In speaking with Ambassador Heath today, Pleven reiterated France could not afford to miss any opportunity to seek an Indochina settlement at Geneva. He indicated no clear idea as to how this might be done but seemed to be envisaging possibility of some sort of territorial split of Vietnam. He said that we must have no illusions and that if Geneva failed to produce a settlement, France would not continue the war. In response to question that he presumably meant that France would not go on alone as distinct from participating in united action, he indicated poor opinion of prospects of latter from military point of view and said France not interested in fighting beside South Koreans. He implied full partnership with US would be another matter but felt air support alone no matter how great would not be enough.

DILLON

751G.00/4–2154 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET SAIGON, April 21, 1954—10 p. m.

2072. Repeated information Paris 685. Paris for Secretary. General O'Daniel has read me excerpts of long Top Secret telegram [1] he intends to send to Admiral Radford describing his latest (and frustrating) interview with General Navarre. O'Daniel likewise proposes as an American course of action that Vietnamese National Army in effect be turned over to selected corps of American training experts to be remolded into effective fighting force. This army, apparently under American command, after its period of training would then commence operations from south to north, which would give troops increasing combat experience and thus in O'Daniel's judgment would place them in juxtaposition with French Forces holding Tonkin Delta at time when real offensive could be mounted next November.

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[1] Reference is presumably to telegram MG 1122A, from General O'Daniel to Admiral Radford, Apr. 22, not printed. This message was devoted largely to the specifics of MAAG relations with French military authorities and to support for the position that the United States should assume larger training responsibilities. It also reported that General Navarre had stated that due to enemy action, he had had to abandon plans for a fall offensive. In addition, O'Daniel expressed the view that Navarre's attitude was not conducive to victory, that he did not grasp the importance of the Vietnamese Army, that he lacked the grasp of important tactical matters, and generally "failed to measure up in ability to wage war here on a scale that is necessary to win." (751G.00/4–2254)

I suggested to General O'Daniel that, if his concept met with approval in our government, there were two arguments which could be used in convincing French Government that it should agree to this form of joint Franco-American-Vietnamese warfare in Indochina. First argument was General Navarre's own admission to O'Daniel that it was impossible to train Vietnamese troops to combat fitness and that Vietnamese Army in effect was incorrigible so far as military potential was concerned. If this was so, we could offer to take over job of making real Vietnamese Army. Second argument, which would appeal to French pride and which, of course, was vital if French were to remain and hold Tonkin gap, would be to portray essential role which France would play in maintaining Tonkin Delta, which is historical sally port from China to Southeast Asia. This type of combined operation might lessen dangers of Franco-American friction, since in effect French would control military operations in north and American-Vietnamese command in South.

Foregoing is sent without any judgment on our part as to military feasibility of O'Daniel's proposal. It is clear, however, that if French assent were to be gained, it could only be after conversations at the highest governmental level, and it is also certain that Navarre would have to be relieved as Commander-in-Chief as he would under no circumstances consent to such a concept.

I suggested to O'Daniel that he request that copy of his message to Radford be passed Paris for the Secretary.[2]

McClintock

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[2] The State Department relayed telegram MG 1122A to Paris in telegram 3818 of Apr. 23. (751G.00/4-2254) On Apr. 24 in Paris, Secretary Dulles asked Ambassador Heath, who was to accompany him to Geneva as a member of the U.S. Delegation, for his opinion regarding the recommendations of General O'Daniel. Heath's memorandum on the subject which expressed considerable skepticism with respect to the O'Daniel proposals, was submitted to the Secretary on Apr. 26. For text, see vol. xvi, p. 571.

751G.00/4-2154 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET Saigon, April 21, 1954—11 p. m.

2077. Repeated information Paris 689. I spent yesterday in Dalat with De Jean. He is deeply pessimistic over prospects for Dien-Bien-Phu, and, in fact, feels that battle will be lost unless a diversionary relief operation can be undertaken. However, he is convinced by his military advisers that present contemplated forlorn effort with only four battalions sortieing from Muong Say will be worse than useless unless somehow Navarre can find minimum of six additional battalions to add to this striking force. (Last night General Alessandri[1] told me that in his estimate Navarre could, in fact, find sufficient troops to establish striking force of twelve battalions, but this would mean giving up Operation Atlante and leaving wide holes in defense of lower Laos and Cambodia.)

De Jean said that French Government is determined "at all costs" to hold Dien-Bien-Phu but does not seem disposed to provide essential personnel, both in ground forces and air to accomplish this objective. De Jean said, "Dien-Bien-Phu has brought French Government even to point of considering internationalization of this war." When I asked if internationalization meant UN or other action, De Jean said it meant participation by US forces with possibly token assistance from UK.

McClintock

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[1] Gen. Marcel Alessandri, Military Adviser to Bao Dai.

751G.00/4–2254 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT SAIGON, April 22, 1954—11 a. m.

2078. Sent Paris niact 702. I saw DeJean this morning. He had spent yesterday afternoon with General Navarre who told him that as a matter of military mathematics, Dien Bien Phu would be lost.

General Navarre told DeJean that desperate recourse to relief column from Muong Say was not feasible because of lack of air power. He could at a maximum find nine battalions for such an effort, but for lack of adequate "infrastructure" (airfields and communication system) and pilot personnel it was not possible to utilize all the aircraft which US has now provided.

At Dien Bien Phu, the situation grows daily more critical. Not only is central redoubt and air strip under direct heavy artillery fire, but enemy system of entrenchments grows ever more tight around defense perimeter, which now is only 1½ kilometers in diameter. This steadily dwindling drop zone makes task of parachuting supplies increasingly difficult. In consequence, Navarre's estimate is that Dien Bien Phu will fall by what he terms "asphyxiation". It seems probable that battle will be over within week or ten days at present rate of deterioration.

DeJean said in General Cogny's estimate General Giap could prepare an onslaught on Tonkin Delta within ten days after fall of Dien Bien Phu. Military situation there, already precarious, could thus easily become critical.

McClintock

740.5/4–2254 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State [1]

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 22, 1954—2 p. m.

Dulte 2. Eyes only for the President, Acting Secretary, Secretary Wilson, Admiral Radford. Ambassador Dillon and I have just finished a conversation with Bidault on EDC and Indochina. Bidault was alone except that General Ely was present during part of the conversation regarding Indochina.

[Here follows a summary of discussion regarding the European Defense Community.]

Regarding Indochina, Bidault said he had just spoken with Laniel and had suggested that Laniel might wish to see me. However, Laniel had preferred that Bidault represent him in this matter. Bidault expressed the opinion, which Ely confirmed, that the situation in Dien Bien Phu was now virtually hopeless. He stated that situation was complicated by disagreements and recriminations as between the generals. Ely expressed the view that break out was impracticable, involving abandonment of wounded and equipment. Bidault and Ely suggested that nothing could save the situation except perhaps "massive" air intervention which the US would have to supply. I said our information was that there were already more planes there than could be handled by crews and technicians, but Ely denied this situation was as bad as I seemed to think. Bidault suggested there should be emergency consultation between Navarre and US military commanders on spot, and indicated that while he had been opposed to internationalizing the war, he would favor it now with US if it would save Dien Bien Phu. He recalled that I had said that I thought US participation was impracticable without UK participation, but Bidault said this would not amount to much anyway and urged that our government should give the most serious consideration to armed intervention promptly as the only way to save the situation.

Ely left at the conclusion of this phase of the conversation, which then turned to organization of defense coalition. Bidault indicated that if Dien Bien Phu fell, he doubted whether there would be any French interest in this. I urged that this was essential to give some cards to work with at Geneva so as to have a chance of obtaining acceptable peace. However, if Dien Bien Phu fell, Bidault doubted that coalition would be looked upon by French nation as designed to accomplish peace at Geneva but rather as designed to keep France in the fighting in southeast Asia. His impression was that if Dien Bien Phu fell, the French would want to pull out entirely from southeast Asia, and assume no continuing commitments and the rest of us would have to get along without France in this area.

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[1] Secretary Dulles was in Paris from Apr. 21–24, meeting with French and British officials regarding Indochina and the impending Geneva Conference. He also participated in a one-day meeting of the North Atlantic Council on Apr. 23, and engaged in conversations on the question of the European Defense Community. For documentation on the discussions held with respect to EDC, see volume v.

My comments and evaluation will follow.

DULLES

790.5/4–2254 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET PRIORITY PARIS, April 22, 1954—8 p. m.

Dulte 3. For Acting Secretary. I lunched with Eden today. I opened by saying I wanted to clear up any misunderstanding which might have arisen re formation of informal working group to examine possibilities for united action in southeast Asia. Eden replied that he would speak very frankly. When he had agreed in London last week to informal working group, he had overlooked Colombo conference which opens April 26.[1] He felt it would be most undesirable to give any public indication of membership in program for united action before the end of the Colombo conference. The establishment of a working group of the ten countries we envisaged would certainly be known and since it would not include three Commonwealth countries, there would probably be criticism emanating from Colombo which would be most unhelpful at Geneva. Re membership in SEA united action program, Eden said he wished to state categorically that contrary to the Newman article in *Herald Tribune*, the UK had issued no invitations of any kind to participate. He had sent messages informing the Commonwealth countries of the discussions with me in London last week, but there had been no question of invitation. Eden obviously has in mind eventual participation of India, Pakistan and Burma, but recognizes this raises question of Formosa, ROK and Japan.

He said that the Burmese were much worried over possibility of Communist take-over of Indochina and he did not exclude possibility that eventually they might participate in united action although perhaps not immediately. But all the Commonwealth countries had stressed that a *sine qua non* for any program was grant by France of real independence to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia including right of future withdrawal from French Union if they so desired.

I asked Eden how long Colombo meeting would last. He was unsure, but had impression not more than a few days. I then outlined to Eden my conversation with Bidault this morning[2] and said that we might be faced at Geneva with a sudden collapse of French will re Indochina. If we took no steps and had no alternatives at Geneva our chances of achieving anything were very slight. On other hand if Communists knew we were working with other like-minded people to unite in defense of southeast Asia, our hands would be greatly strengthened at Geneva and the Communists might be brought to realize that their extravagant ambitions re southeast Asia would be opposed by a common will and therefore they might be brought to renounce them. Furthermore, we must ourselves have plans for holding of remainder of SEA should Indochina collapse and a point of departure was a common assessment of what was possible from the military viewpoint. We discussed very generally and without reaching any conclusions the possibility of a secret military appraisal of what we could do to bolster Thailand. One very tentative idea was that a US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Thai military group might secretly examine such possibility. (French would not be included because basic assumption on which such a group would carry out study would be French collapse in Indochina). Eden said he was prepared to recommend to London the establishment of above secret military group if we wished him to but after further discussion it was agreed that we would make no recommendations to our respective governments till we had probed the French further here and had a clearer picture of what is in their minds. I would appreciate your reaction to above possibility since Eden may wish to talk about it again in the next several days.[3]

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[1] Regarding the Colombo Conference, see telegram 888 to Karachi, Apr. 16, p. 1344.

[2] See telegram Dulte 2, *supra*.

DULLES

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[3] For the reply by Acting Secretary Smith, see telegram Tedul 2 to Geneva, Apr. 24, p. 1393.

Editorial Note

On Thursday, April 22, 1954, at 4 p. m., Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, and French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault met at the Quai d'Orsay to discuss the Geneva Conference, which convened on April 26. For the record of this tripartite meeting, see volume XVI, page 544.

751G.00/4–2254 : Telegram

The Chargé at Phnom Penh (Montllor) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY PHNOM PENH, April 22, 1954—9 p. m.

126. Sent priority Saigon 232, repeated information Department 126, Paris priority 102. Prime Minister Penn Nouth and Defense

Minister General Tioulong in hurriedly called briefing of diplomatic corps Phnom Penh presented most pessimistic picture of military situation as it has developed in last week. Meeting held afternoon April 21 attended by Thai Minister, British, Japanese and American Chargés. Cambodian officials present were Prime Minister, Minister Defense, Foreign Minister Tep Phan, Information Minister Pho Proeung and Chief Protocol Monissara. General Tioulong stated military situation had deteriorated badly as Viet Minh increase pressure in all sectors. Deployment three battalions to critical northeast area at suggestion French command has completely denuded south and center of country. By concerted effort, Tioulong estimated Viet Minh could take over country in one week since royal army strength is spread so thin that it cannot halt major concentrated enemy effort. Phnom Penh is now defended by only two companies and six armored cars. French have told Cambodia not to rely on any substantial French assistance in troops since French command in south Vietnam has none to spare. Tioulong pointed out vulnerability of road between Kratie and Stung Treng (Route Nationale 31) to attack by Viet Minh battalions invading northeastern Cambodia. In event road is cut, Stung Treng will only be accessible by air, and several battalions would be isolated there.

Tioulong made plea for immediate material help from friendly countries. He said Cambodia has manpower and will to fight Communist invaders, but it lacks arms and material means.

Prime Minister Penn Nouth endorsed plea for arms, adding that all of his previous requests to visiting American legislators and statesmen, including Vice President Nixon, had been to no avail. He also mentioned that King's request to Ambassador Heath for a few obsolete airplanes had gone unheeded. In light of this attitude, he did not understand how great powers expected Cambodia to hold out against invasion of foreign aggressor.

Cambodia, said Prime Minister, is on brink of disaster. Foreign military assistance given by France has always been predicated on containing Viet Minh within Cambodia, but never on crushing them. Now that two elite Viet Minh battalions have penetrated into Cambodia, and threaten Mekong valley, balance of power has shifted to Viet Minh, and in eyes of Prime Minister, fate of Cambodia could be settled in matter of days.

Penn Nouth revealed his government was planning new appeal to United Nations and asked representatives of US, Great Britain, Japan and Thailand to ask their governments to give Cambodia full support.[1] Cambodia's most urgent need was stated to be automatic weapons (automatic rifles and submachine guns) as well as liaison aircraft.

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[1] Regarding the Cambodian appeal to the United Nations, see memorandum of conversation by Assistant Secretary Key, Apr. 21, p. 1356.

Financial assistance to mobilize an additional 10,000 men was also requested. Penn Nouth said such a contribution by US would not even be felt by America.

Prime Minister pointed out that, whether we like fact or not, Cambodians want to protect their own country, and refuse to take orders from French. This fact has existed since 1946 but France seems to refuse to accept it.

In an emotional ending that almost brought tears to his eyes, Prime Minister asked whether great powers that are leading fight against Communism will stand by as a small nation that only wants to live in peace with world is swallowed up by Communist tide. It would be cheaper and easier to help Cambodia defend itself now than try to wrest territory from Viet Minh hands later on.

General Tioulong openly asked that a MAAG officer visit Phnom Penh immediately to assess situation in light of gravity that it has taken for the free world.

Comment: Acting High Commissioner Gorce called on me morning April 22 and reassured me that situation was not as serious as Cambodians have been making it out. Gorce believes Cambodians can face present Viet Minh strength if they have will to fight. Unfortunately, Cambodian officer corps is in army for gain rather than as patriotic duty, and according to Gorce, this is what King found most disheartening in present emergency. It contributed to King's decision to put Tioulong, a strong personality, in charge of army, with hope he may be able to instill some badly needed discipline.

Embassy has no information on proposed text of appeal to UN but Gorce has been instructed to tell Prime Minister that an appeal to Security Council at this time would not be in interest of allied powers.

French military attaché to High Commissioner calling this afternoon. I will report his assessment of military situation.

MONTLLOR

Secretary's Staff Meetings, lot 63 D 75

Summary of Acting Secretary's Staff Meeting, Department of State, April 23, 1954, 9:15 a.m.[1]

SECRET

[Here follow a list of those present (16) and the record of discussion of subjects other than Indochina.]

4. *Indo-China.*

The Acting Secretary discussed with Mr. Morton making suitable preparations on the Hill for possible quick loss of Dien Bien Phu and French failure to ratify EDC. Both agreed that we must prepare the

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[1] Prepared by Walter K. Scott, Director of the Executive Secretariat.

Hill as early as possible for these events. Mr. Morton, however, in stating that he had already begun work with some members of Congress, suggested that the Acting Secretary not meet with the leaders until after the Secretary's analysis message has been received.

In reply to Mr. Nolting's request for guidance for the MSA budget presentation today, the Acting Secretary agreed that the line should be that the Navarre Plan does not depend on Dien Bien Phu from the military standpoint; that actually, militarily speaking, it has been successful inasmuch as the Communists had lost 20% of men and resources compared to a loss of only 5% of the French if the whole garrison were to be lost. That our line should be we were still covering full support for the Navarre Plan. However, the Acting Secretary stated that psychologically the loss of Dien Bien Phu may fold up the French both in France and Indo-China.

(Cambodia). Mr. Key reported that the Cambodian Minister had agreed to handle their presentation to the UN along lines that would be satisfactory to us.

(American Public Opinion). Mr. Phleger stated that he felt American public opinion must be prepared for the possible loss of Dien Bien Phu. He felt that the average American would be convinced that all would be lost if this stronghold were to fall. Mr. Phillips doubted that the average American was well enough informed to form such an opinion. Mr. Murphy stated that in Asia its loss would be taken as an American defeat from all the aid and assistance we had given the French.

The Acting Secretary and Mr. Bonbright agreed that there would be little possibility of the strong stand of the French at Dien Bien Phu before its loss acting as a spur to morale along the lines "Remember Pearl Harbor"—"Remember the Alamo". The Acting Secretary felt that this type of psychological spur to anger and revenge normally developed in the early portion of a war; that after 8 years of French struggle there, there was no possibility of this result.

751G.00/4–2354 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Paris[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 23, 1954—10:58 a. m.
NIACT

Tedul 5. Eyes only for the Secretary. The following is a message from the President:

"Dear Foster: My first reaction upon reading your report on your initial conversation with Bidault[2] is to assure you of my full understanding of the feeling of frustration that must consume you. I refer particularly to our earlier efforts to get French to ask for internationalization of the war, and to get the British to appreciate the seriousness of the situation of Dien Bien Phu and the probable result on the entire war of defeat at that place. There is little I can say now to help you rally the spirits and determination of our allies, but I am so confident of the unity of convictions you and I hold on these and related matters that I do not even feel the need of assuring you again of my complete support.

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[1] Typed from a message from the White House.

[2] See telegram Dulte 2, Apr. 22, p. 1361.

"I do suggest that you make sure the British Government fully appreciates the gravity of the situation and the great danger of French collapse in that region. The British must not be able merely to shut their eyes and later plead blindness as an alibi for failing to propose a positive program.

"Winston has cabled me asking to come over here about 20 May.[3] I have no objection to a full and frank talk, but I am bound to say that I see no profit in it unless they are ready to look facts in the face and take and support obviously necessary decisions. I shall not answer him until I hear from you. I shall not be back in Washington for several days.

"In the meantime, I am thankful, on behalf of America, that we have in you such a skilled and devoted representative to support our interests in these fateful days.

"With warm regard, D.D.E."

SMITH

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[3] The message from Prime Minister Churchill has not been identified. For President Eisenhower's reply of Apr. 26, suggesting that no plans for a meeting be worked out until Secretary Dulles returned to Washington, see volume VI.

State–JCS Meetings, lot 61 D 417

Substance of Discussions of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at the Pentagon Building, April 23, 1954, 11:30 a. m.[1]

TOP SECRET

[Here follow a list of those present (22) and the record of brief discussion of a subject other than Indochina.]

Admiral Radford then reviewed briefly his plans. He was scheduled to leave for Paris that afternoon. He intended to talk to both the French and the British Chiefs, and he had an appointment with Mr. Dulles prior to the Secretary's departure for Geneva. The subject of these discussions would be the proposal that on a military level representatives of Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Thailand and the U.S. look into the question of building up the military capabilities of Thailand against likely possibility of a debacle in Indochina. The Admiral added that he planned to leave Paris on Tuesday, April 27 in plenty of time for the NSC meeting in Washington on the Thursday following.[2]

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[1] This State Department draft was not cleared with the participants.

Mr. Murphy then gave a brief review of our position on Geneva. He emphasized that we were adamant on our position that there was to be no semblance of a five power conference. Mr. Murphy also referred to the present state of EDC, with particular attention to the machinations of the French Socialists which would probably delay ratification of EDC even further.

The discussion then turned to a consideration of the serious situation in Indochina. Admiral Radford referred to the practical factors which a commander-in-chief in Indochina had to take into account. He pointed out that a cease fire, or any other kind of a settlement, did not lessen the possibility of a wide-spread popular uprising, particularly in Hanoi, Haiphong and Saigon. On the contrary, any settlement might be a signal for a general bloody insurrection which would move very fast. The French no doubt have not forgotten the incident which occurred in Hanoi in December 1946, and were without question concerned about the evacuation of dependents from the Tonkin delta.

With respect to Dien Bien Phu, Admiral Radford noted that the picture was extremely dark. He said that there was only enough food and water in the garrison to last for two days. And what would happen when Dien Bien Phu falls, he asked. General Giap, in the opinion of General Cogny, would probably next turn his attentions to the Red River delta, and (again according to General Cogny) would probably be able to overrun it in a matter of some ten days. The Viet Minh could no doubt count on mass defections among Vietnamese troops as a result of the fall of Dien Bien Phu, and this would certainly be of assistance to the Viet Minh.

Admiral Radford recalled a conversation he had had with General de Lattre de Tassigny some two years ago in which the General had stated that there was no need to worry about evacuation because if the situation got so bad that evacuation became necessary, there would be no possibility of evacuation. This was at a time, Admiral Radford said, when preparations were being made by the U.S. (Manila Liaison Group—MLG) and the French to evacuate Americans under our overall evacuation plan. The French would probably try to evacuate to Haiphong, the Admiral continued, but in order to make the operation a success how many civilians would they have to sacrifice? They were numbered in the thousands in the delta. What was much more likely was a situation where the French, and those Vietnamese who had been loyal to them (and thus marked men from the point of view of the Viet

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[2] For the memorandum of discussion at the 194th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, Apr. 29, see p. 1431.

Minh), would have to fight their way out without any chance of orderly withdrawal.

Referring briefly to U.S. policy on the Indochinese question, Mr. Murphy pointed out that we were tied to a difficult political situation in the U.S.

General Ridgway then referred to the experience in Korea, where the situation was a great deal better because it was possible to conduct fairly orderly evacuation operations because of our naval and air superiority.

Continuing on the Indochinese situation, Admiral Radford pointed out that the French were always dealing with intangibles; they could never really catch the temper of the people.

Mr. Murphy then referred to a conversation which he had had in Tokyo in June 1953 with King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia,[3] when the King stated that most Cambodians did not regard the Communists as their enemies as much as the French; that the majority of his people would no doubt fold their arms and let the Communists move in if worse came to the worst.

Finally, Admiral Radford referred to the strange attitude of the French, who apparently take the view that they have it in their power to make some kind of a settlement in Indochina without consulting with the Associated States. Such a concept was unrealistic, and the Admiral had noted with approval that Secretary Dulles had spoken a few plain truths on this subject to the French.

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[3] Conversation not identified.

751G.00/4–2354 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Paris [1]

SECRET WASHINGTON, April 23, 1954—12:02 p. m.

PRIORITY

Tosec 6. Following is memo from R comparing Peiping editorial of April 21 with Chinese Communist warnings issued in 1950 with respect to Korea.[2]

"1. The warning given in the April 21 Peiping *People's Daily* editorial that Communist China would react to a US 'aggression' is clearly reminiscent of the warnings given prior to Chinese Communist intervention in Korea. Indeed, it appears designed to be so reminiscent, a fact that is pointed up in the New York *Daily Worker's* handling of the story under a Tokyo dateline. The *Daily Worker* after quoting the *People's Daily* editorial in bold type added that 'Observers have recalled that the Peking Government issued similar soft-spoken warnings when General MacArthur began his march to the Yalu River in 1950.'

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[1] This telegram, containing the text of a memorandum prepared in the office of the Special Assistant for Intelligence (W. Park Armstrong), was drafted by Jeffrey C. Kitchen, Deputy Director of the Executive Secretariat.

[2] For documentation on the Chinese Communist warnings of 1950, see *Foreign Relations*, 1950, vol. VII, pp. 731 ff.

"2. The phraseology was closely parallel: the April 21 statement asserted that 'faced with armed aggression, they [the Chinese people] [3] will certainly not refrain from doing something about it;' on September 24, 1950, Chou En-lai in a message to the UN stated that 'the peace-loving peoples of the world would not stand by watching with folded arms' as the US sought 'to expand its aggression against China;' and on October 1 Chou asserted in an article published in *Pravda* that Peiping would not supinely tolerate seeing their neighbors savagely attacked by the imperialists.'

"3. The current Chinese Communist warning followed Moscow's insistence in a *Pravda* editorial of April 11 that Communist China is the real target of U.S. activities in Indochina as well as in other parts of Asia. In 1950 Moscow charged as early as late August that US 'aggression' in Korea was preliminary to an attack on China.

"4. However, there are several significant differences between current Chinese Communist statements and those of 1950. As early as April 27, 1950 the Chinese Communists had made official protests regarding an alleged US air 'invasion' of China. Other such protests were made on August 30, September 10, September 24, October 18 and 28. In contrast, current charges are that the US is preparing future aggression. Similarly, in September and October 1950 Peiping issued a number of warnings via Indian Ambassador Panikkar against the US's crossing the 38th parallel. There is currently nothing comparable to these warnings.

"5. These differences may, however, derive only from the fact that US participation in the Indochinese conflict is at a different stage than it was in the case of Korea. Thus the other charges might follow if there should be a step-up in US activities. The present editorial, like most of the recent Communist propaganda on the subject of US 'aggressive' intentions, is specifically directed to the Geneva conference, and appears to be designed in the first instance to document the line to be taken at Geneva by the Chinese Communist delegation and during the conference by Chinese Communist propaganda. At the same time, however, the editorial appears an expression of the seriousness with which Peiping views the Indochina crisis. It is to be expected that this point will be further amplified by Chou En-lai and the other Chinese Communist delegates at Geneva, whether in statements to the conference or in *démarches* to Western diplomats."

SMITH

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[3] Brackets in the source text.

740.5/4-2354

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor (MacArthur)[1]

TOP SECRET [PARIS,] April 23, 1954.

Participants: Prime Minister Laniel
M. Vidal
M. Bougenot[2]
Mr. MacArthur
Mme. Laniel (also present but did not enter into conversation)

I had lunch privately with Mr. Laniel today at the Matignon. Messrs. Vidal and Bougenot were present for most of our conversation, as was Madame Laniel, who did not enter into the conversation.

[Here follows discussion regarding the question of French ratification of the European Defense Community.]

Reverting to Indochina, Laniel then said that if Dien-Bien-Phu fell the entire French picture would be changed. With all Bidault's qualities he did not think that he, or any other French Foreign Minister, could avoid reaching an agreement with the Communists at Geneva—even if unfavorable—if Dien-Bien-Phu fell.

He said that he had seen General Ely yesterday and asked him the following two questions:

1. Could Dien-Bien-Phu be saved? General Ely replied that if the US would intervene with about 200 to 300 carrier aircraft, he was convinced Dien-Bien-Phu could be saved, but hours were of the utmost importance and in 3 or 4 days such intervention would be meaningless.
2. Could the garrison of Dien-Bien-Phu fight its way out? Ely replied that under existing circumstances it could not make a fighting withdrawal. However, if US aircraft intervened massively, there was the possibility of a French relief column of a few battalions moving up from Laos. This was not a good prospect but might be feasible with US air intervention. Otherwise, it was not possible. Laniel summed up as follows: If Dien-Bien-Phu falls, France will have no choice but to accept a cease-fire. Also, this defeat will have a profound effect on EDC, probably destroying the possibilities of favorable French action.

I said to Laniel that the picture he had painted seemed to me catastrophic in terms of France's future. In essence, what he was saying was that the fall of a small outpost—important though it might be psychologically—would result in a capitulation by France and other decisions which would nullify all progress made in the past few years in our collective endeavors. It seemed to me that France would be left in a position of weak and defeated isolation. I could not conceive how any Frenchman could reason that the fall of an outpost in Indochina must result in the abandonment of that area and the destruction of the collective defense system which we had together developed for the defense of Western Europe. Laniel replied that he agreed it was not logical but that Dien-Bien-Phu had become a symbol in the minds of the French people and Parliament. It had become a tremendously emotional thing and Frenchmen were no longer capable of reasoning about it. I said that in essence the picture he painted would seem to leave the US no choice but to rethink, not only its strategic policy, but its entire political relationship with respect to France. Laniel said this would be a tragedy and one which he would do his utmost to avert, but he did not think that he could control the ground swell which would follow the loss of Dien-Bien-Phu and doubted that he would be long in office after its fall.

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[1] This conversation took place at the Hotel Matignon from 1 to 4 p. m. For the portions of this memorandum concerning the European Defense Community, see volume v. The meeting as a whole was summarized in telegram Dulte 9 from Paris, Apr. 23. (740.5/4-2354)

[2] André Bougenot, Under Secretary of State to Prime Minister Laniel.

I said that while Laniel had made no direct requests to me for US air intervention, he had certainly implied such a request. On a personal basis I could only tell him that I saw little possibility of any US intervention if it were not part of an effective collective arrangement for united action in that area. In confidence, I could tell him that we had had consultations on a bipartisan basis with members of the US Congress. We felt that if there were effective collective arrangements we would probably be in a position to participate more actively but to ask us to intervene with aircraft to save Dien-Bien-Phu was in effect asking us to commit US prestige to save not only that fortress but the rest of Indochina without any political basis for such action. To me this did not seem possible. Bougenot said that US prestige need not be committed. The carrier based aircraft could be under nominal French command for the strikes and it need not be more than an isolated action lasting two or three days. If necessary, the aircraft could be painted with French insignia. They could, for example, be construed as part of the Foreign Legion for this limited action.

I replied that it just was not possible to commit US forces to battle in the way envisaged. There would certainly have to be Congressional support for such action. We could not commit US forces on a temporary basis as part of either the Foreign Legion or the French military establishment without the support of the US Congress.

Laniel said that if we could do nothing to save Dien-Bien-Phu, he thought the future was very dark. He repeated his conviction based on General Ely's estimate, that massive US carrier based aircraft would permit the holding of Dien-Bien-Phu.

I said that I was not a military man and, therefore, not capable of any military judgment. Personally I doubted seriously that intervention by aircraft would save the garrison. With respect to the future I thought that one had to always envisage the worst happening and if Dien-Bien-Phu fell in the coming days, I wondered what position his government would take, quite aside from the question of French Parliamentary and public opinion. Laniel said that he could not tell me what would happen. He personally was opposed to any agreement which would lead to the turnover of Indochina to the Communists, whether it be by a territorial division or the fusion of the Viet Nam and Viet Minh governments. However, he thought there would be an irresistible ground swell in France calling for a cease-fire on almost any terms and he did not think any government could remain in power, which did not take this into consideration. He said that no one who did not live in France could understand the depth of French feeling against continuation of the Indochinese war. One might call this psychological, but it was nonetheless a deep and burning reality. Furthermore, if the fortress fell he thought all the Viet Nam fence sitters, including members of the present Viet Nam administration, would scramble toward Ho Chi Minh's bandwagon. He did not exclude defections by Viet Nam military units.

I said that I could only repeat what I had said previously, to the effect that it would be a tragedy for France and the free world if everything we had achieved together over the past few years were cast aside because of the loss of a relatively minor outpost in Indochina. I recognized the psychological implications but it seemed to me that the French must think how to limit the damage if Dien-Bien-Phu falls, rather than to throw up their hands in abandonment. Laniel said that he agreed but thought there was no possible way he could see to limit the damage.

In conclusion, he said that he would be glad to have General Ely give the Secretary a first hand estimate of the situation in Indochina from the French military view if the Secretary so desired. I said I believed the Secretary had seen General Ely yesterday [3] but would pass on this message. Laniel also said that he understood Admiral Radford was arriving tomorrow. He would like to see Admiral Radford if this were possible. He understood that Radford was sympathetic to the idea of supporting Dien-Bien-Phu with US aircraft and he would appreciate the latter's estimate on what was possible. I made no comment.

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[3] Reference is presumably to the meeting between Secretary Dulles and Foreign Minister Bidault on the morning of Apr. 22, reported in telegram Dulte 2, p. 1361. General Ely was present during the portion of that meeting devoted to Indochina.

751G.00/4–2354 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 23, 1954—8 p. m.

Dulte 7. Eyes only for Acting Secretary from Secretary. Please inform President and Radford urgently that Bidault received in middle of afternoon Council session[1] copy of message from Navarre to Laniel which he gave me to read.[2] He will talk to me further on subject at dinner tonight but in brief situation at Dien Bien Phu is desperate. Attempt to regain Huguette has claimed last reserves. Only alternatives Navarre sees are (1) Operation Vautour which would be massive B–29 bombing (which I understand would be US operation from US bases outside Indochina) or (2) request for cease-fire (which I assume would be at Dien Bien Phu and not throughout all Indochina.)

I told Bidault B–29 intervention as proposed seemed to me out of question under existing circumstances but that I would report all this urgently to the President and that I would discuss it with Admiral Radford immediately upon latter's arrival in Paris tomorrow evening.

Bidault gives the impression of a man close to the breaking point. His mental condition at this morning's session was greatly improved over yesterday, but it has been painful to watch him presiding over the Council at this afternoon's long session. He is obviously exhausted and is confused and rambling in his talk.

DULLES

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[1] Reference is to North Atlantic Council proceedings.

[2] The message has not been found in Department of State files.

740.5/4–2354 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 23, 1954—10 p. m.

Dulte 8. No distribution. Eyes only for Acting Secretary from Secretary. Please pass following message to The President:

"I am deeply touched by, and grateful for, your message.[1] The situation here is tragic. France is almost visibly collapsing under our eyes. There is, of course, no military or logical reason why loss of Dien Bien Phu should lead to collapse of French will, in relation both to Indochina and EDC. It seems to me that Dien Bien Phu has become a symbol out of all proportion to its military importance. It does not seem possible to change this situation, although we are not giving up hope and are doing everything possible to keep their spirit up. The position today is a little better as regards EDC, but probably if Dien Bien Phu falls, the government will be taken over by defeatists.

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[1] For text of the President's message, see telegram Tedul 5, Apr. 23, p. 1366.

I shall talk to Eden about Winston's message and give you my considered judgment shortly. My basic reaction is yours, namely, that a meeting should solemnize and publicize a major decision sufficiently explored and developed in advance to be sure that it is in hand. Faithfully yours, Foster."

DULLES

751G.00/4–2354 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 23, 1954—midnight.

Dulte 10. Eyes only Acting Secretary. At Quai d'Orsay dinner tonight following developed through bilateral talks:

1. Pleven informed me that "cease-fire" referred to in Navarre's message[1] would in his opinion not be local, but general throughout Indochina.

2. Eden expressed to me grave doubts that Britain would cooperate in any active fighting to save Indochina. He expressed fear that United States intervention might initiate World War Three and urged we should take no such action without prior consultation. He expressed view that there should be prompt military consultations in Washington, including representatives of Thailand to make plans to endeavor hold situation if Indochina lost. He said he did not believe that Churchill cable to President[2] was primarily related to Indochina situation.

3. Bidault expressed to Dillon his belief that if United States participated to help save Dien Bien Phu and if this help proved inadequate for that purpose, under these circumstances, French would as matter of honor go on fighting. However, he expressed to me the view that assuming Dien Bien Phu fell without United States intervention, he saw no hope of any French reaction, other than acceptance of defeat and probably leftwing government which would hold office on sufferance of Communists, although probably without open Communist participation.

4. Gruenther expressed view he had never seen French morale so low.

5. There seems to be some possibility that a new formula can be found to satisfy Mollet[3] regarding EDC. However, this calculation on basis of present political situation and does not take account of repercussions which could come from Indochina.

DULLES

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[1] Regarding the message from General Navarre, see telegram Dulte 7, Apr. 23, p. 1374.

[2] Regarding the message from Prime Minister Churchill to President Eisenhower, see footnote 3, p. 1367.

[3] Guy Mollet, Secretary-General of the French Socialist Party.

PPS files, lot 65 D 101, "Indochina"

Memorandum by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET [PARIS,] April 23, 1954.

Subject: Situation in Indochina

This memorandum is a consensus resulting from discussions among Messrs. MacArthur, Robertson, Sullivan[1] and Bowie, and Admiral Davis.[2] Our estimate of the situation is as follows:

1. As matters now stand, according to M. Bidault, France will probably seek at Geneva to end the Indochina hostilities on almost any terms, if Dien Bien Phu falls, as now appears likely within ten days or so. Under those conditions, there appears little hope that the French will continue the war for any length of time, unless the Communists make such extreme demands that the French cannot take the humiliation of accepting them, even in their present mood.

2. Judging by their propaganda, the Communists may well propose a "cease-fire", probably with each side retaining its present positions. The conditions proposed by Laniel for a cease-fire are likely to be eroded away under pressure. Such a solution would leave the Viet Minh in *de facto* control of areas throughout Viet-Nam where they could consolidate their position and from which they could penetrate other parts of Viet-Nam. Thus it would probably be even more damaging to retention of any part of Viet-Nam than a partition.

3. The British can be expected to support French efforts to end the hostilities. Apparently they would prefer some form of partition, but seem to be most anxious—

a) To avoid any commitment to enter the hostilities, and
b) To deter our intervention for fear of the Chinese reaction and its consequences.

4. The Colombo meeting of the South Asian states will almost surely make proposals for an armistice or some other ending of the war and will probably express disapproval of any intervention.

5. Under present conditions, the U.S. appears to have only two real choices with respect to Indochina:

a) To accept as almost certain the loss of Vietnam and to seek to minimize the consequences of such a disaster; or
b) To provide military forces for Indochina (with any others ready to do so) in the hope of deterring the French from settling at Geneva on unacceptable terms.

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[1] Charles A. Sullivan, Deputy for American, South Asian, and Far Eastern Affairs, Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense; Adviser, U.S. Delegation to the Geneva Conference.

[2] Vice Adm. Arthur C. Davis, Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense; Special Adviser, U.S. Delegation to the Geneva Conference.

6. U.S. intervention will involve the following risks:

a) Even if it should begin with air and naval forces, the U.S. would have to be prepared to commit all necessary forces, which might ultimately include ground forces.

b) The political steps in Indochina necessary for success (real independence and strong Vietnamese forces) would tend to reduce the French support for the action over time. Thus, the U.S. would probably have to carry a greater share of the load as time went on.

c) If the Chinese reacted in force, the hostilities would probably expand into general war with China and possibly into a war involving the Soviet Union.

7. If the U.S. should decide not to intervene but to seek to minimize the consequences of the loss of Vietnam:

a) It should seek to shape the Indochinese settlement so as to salvage as much of Vietnam as possible from Communist control and to make Laos and Cambodia as defensible as feasible.

b) It should attempt to create as rapidly as possible some regional grouping with definite commitments to secure the remainder of Southeast Asia from further loss to the Communists. This would have to include military obligations to defend the area in order to attract local support and overcome the effects of the Communist success in Vietnam.

8. The U.S. has only a very limited time in which to make its decision:

a) When the French begin to negotiate seriously to end the war, it will probably be too late to deter them by an offer of aid. According to Bidault and Pleven, if Dien Bien Phu falls, France will not be interested in a joint effort even if we are prepared to make it.

b) If France decides to settle, then even if Vietnam invited us to intervene, it would be extremely difficult to do so in view of the colossal technical problems posed by French withdrawal and the probable attitude of the French, British and South Asian States.

751G.00/4–2354: Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State[1]

TOP SECRET PRIORITY

SAIGON, April 23, 1954—7 p.m.
[Received April 24—3:51 a.m.]

2096. Sent Paris priority 699. I saw De Jean this evening. He was most dispirited. He said, "In all my years of service, I have never seen such a combination of military and political calamities." We had a drink.

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[1] The source text indicates that Hoey of PSA was notified of this message at 6:35 a.m., Apr. 24, and that it was passed to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 6:45 a.m.

De Jean said that he had discussed Dien-Bien-Phu with Navarre this morning. De Castries has asked urgently for more reinforcements, but if Navarre drops these troops, he will have no reserve for relief column which would try to help remnant of garrison fight rear guard retreat from Dien-Bien-Phu. Navarre told De Jean that he had not yet made up his mind to which manner to use these reserves.

I told De Jean that General O'Daniel and his staff had worked up a tactical plan for relief of Dien-Bien-Phu which General O'Daniel hesitated to give directly to Navarre because of his extremely limited terms of reference as MAAG Chief. O'Daniel had asked me, however, to outline his plan to De Jean and if latter agreed, he could submit it to Navarre as his own notion.

O'Daniel's plan calls for armored column to move toward Dien-Bien-Phu from Hanoi. This would consist of two armored groups supported by three groupes mobiles which would be taken from Operation Atlante and central Laos. Simultaneously with attack by armored column from east O'Daniel proposes that four in Muong Say sortie toward Dien-Bien-Phu. At moment armored column would near battleground, three reserve parachute battalions now under Cogny's command would drop on Tuangiao, which is enemy's supply base for Dien-Bien-Phu. At same time garrison under De Castries would sortie. With sufficient aerial support, O'Daniel feels that this plan might assure victory, or at least avert defeat.

De Jean was interested in this sketch and said that he would communicate it to Navarre without any indication as to its origin. He said, however, that he felt the hour was very late and he doubted if Navarre would agree to these suggestions. De Jean also pointed to precarious balance of forces in delta, but I assured him that, according to O'Daniel, elements envisaged for use in his plan would not deprive Cogny of his units in delta other than the three battalion reserve of parachutists. I likewise added that if Navarre bought O'Daniel's plan, latter would urgently recommend to our government that naval and possibly air transport lift be provided to bring troops from south and central Indochina to Tonkin.

McClintock

751G.00/4–2454 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT

Saigon, April 24, 1954—10 a. m.
[Received 3:26 a. m.]

2098. Sent Paris niact 701, Geneva niact 3, repeated information London 47. Geneva for Secretary. Department pass Defense for Radford. Last night General Navarre told me that either war in Indochina must end by negotiated peace or else it must be internationalized with participation by US in all arms, including infantry.

He said Dien-Bien-Phu had turned out to be tragedy. Under his original strategic concept, his main effort had not been calculated to mature until October. However, fixing of Geneva conference had acted as sinister catalyst with result that enemy had now concentrated—with increasing Chinese aid—his entire battle force at Dien-Bien-Phu Furthermore, elsewhere in Indochina balance of military force was so precariously delicate that presence on either side of two additional light divisions would mean victory or defeat.

At Dien-Bien-Phu itself situation was desperate. Navarre confirmed loss of point one in "Huguette" which signifies reduction of drop zone to almost zero. He said there are 2,600 wounded at Dien-Bien-Phu of whom 600 are gravely wounded and in underground dressing stations. Remaining 2,000 to some degree are still able to fight. However, of 9,000 effectives under De Castries' command, only 3,000 at present time are combat worthy. This is due to battle fatigue and the extreme attrition on personnel of a fight which has gone on since March 13.

Navarre said De Castries had asked him not to send more Vietnamese reinforcements as Vietnamese troops at Dien-Bien-Phu could not stand up under artillery fire. This posed severe problem because first parachute battalion which US Air Force has flown out to Tourane, according to Navarre, is not up to full strength, having only 350 men. In consequence, this battalion must be fleshed out with troops on hand and he would have wished to use Vietnamese had that been possible.

I asked Navarre if there were any hope of sending in relief column. He said that it was militarily more advantageous in view of toll which De Castries could still exact on enemy to have garrison fight on until end. Even if relief column could reach Dien-Bien-Phu, which he doubted, the maximum survivors who might get out of Dien-Bien-Phu, as result would not exceed 1,500 men.

Dien-Bien-Phu, however, from pure military point of view had paid some dividends. 15,000 Viet Minh casualties had resulted from battle thus far, including 8,000 dead. Thus, when Dien-Bien-Phu was over, enemy would find himself in greatly weakened condition. It was necessary therefore to be able to strike him quickly. To wait until October would be too late. However, France of itself and with the increasingly unreliable Vietnamese National Army did not have the strength to strike that essential rapid blow.

Navarre said morale and efficiency of Vietnamese National Army had begun to go downhill ever since announcement of Geneva conference. He said likewise that similar, though less damaging effect had been evident in French Union forces. Situation in National Army was so bad that day before yesterday an entire battalion near Tuy Hoa in Operation Atlante had mutinied.

At least four times during evening's conversation General Navarre emphasized the necessity for brief conference at Geneva. He said, "If the conference lasts three months, I cannot foretell what might happen here." Again he repeated that Indochina war would enter an immediately new phase either through some sort of negotiated peace or by international action with US participation.

I am providing General O'Daniel with copy of this message.

McClintock

751G.5/4–2454 : Telegram

The Consul at Hanoi (Cameron) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY HANOI, April 24, 1954—11 a.m.
[Received 3:52 a.m.]

606. Repeated information Saigon 511, Paris 276. When Kidder [1] and I called on Governor Tri yesterday, we found him deeply discouraged about current situation in North Vietnam. He painted a particularly black picture of situation in the delta, citing reports from province chiefs that in some localities the paramilitary forces were considering disbanding because lack of arms prevented effective resistance to Viet Minh. Tri mentioned daily telegrams from province chiefs reporting paramilitary losses and said that in the near future he might be confronted with decision to disband the whole paramilitary structure. This, he emphasized, would amount to handing delta completely over to Viet Minh because extent to which delta is being held today depended on paramilitary forces. If these forces were disbanded, Tri foresaw that the individuals would be immediately impressed by the Viet Minh. Tri added that delta had been virtually stripped of French Union Forces and that those which remained were physically exhausted by continuous action.

Using phrase which Secretary recently employed, Tri said time for "promises" had long passed, but he felt there was still time, though short, for "acts". In Tri's mind, two "acts" are immediately necessary: 1, transfer of French Union Forces from "Atlante" operation to delta and 2, arming effectively the paramilitary forces. He said he had discussed transfer troops from "Atlante" with Cogny on April 22. Documents supporting request for arms to paramilitary forces have been forwarded to Embassy and MAAG, Saigon. (Tri will undoubtedly review this problem with General O'Daniel when he visits Hanoi early next week.)

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[1] Randolph A. Kidder, First Secretary, Embassy at Saigon.

Tri urged that these measures be rapidly effected in order prepare delta withstand increased Viet Minh assaults which he felt would be inevitable consequence of fall Dien Bien Phu. This unhappy event, would, he pointed out, release battle-hardened Viet Minh troops for action in delta which, as he put it, had always been and remained, the objective "number one" of the Viet Minh.

Comment: Tri's attitude yesterday was in sharp contrast with that which he showed week previously when Sturm and I had long talk with him about situation in North Vietnam. I understand that his attitude in past has been marked by changes from hopefulness to discouragement. Sturm who is now in Department and Embassy Saigon are in much better position than I to assess significance of Tri's remarks. I suggest they be read in light most recent restatement General Cogny's views contained Contel 591.[2]

Tri's discouraging estimate of current situation in North was corroborated in subsequent conversation Kidder and I had with Compain, French Delegate General in North Vietnam. Compain said that in his opinion situation here had reached its most critical point in long struggle against Viet Minh. He commented that except for Hanoi, Haiphong, Namdinh and a tenuous hold on Hanoi–Haiphong communications, the delta was no longer held by French Union Forces. He, too, thought that though very late, there was still time to redress situation.

CAMERON

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[2] Dated Apr. 16, p. 1340.

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Presidential Telephone Conversation, April 24, 1954[1]

Approximately 9:50 President was called by General Smith, who said the situation in France was evolving so rapidly it was difficult to give any considered appraisal. The EDC situation has somewhat approved [*improved*], but the French attitude toward Indo-China has deteriorated greatly. (Background information on all this is being sent down in coded messages.)

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[1] The drafting officer has not been identified.

General Gruenther says he has never seen French morale so low. No one can tell what will happen—government may fall.

General Smith said Eden has grave doubts that Britain would cooperate in any activity in that area. He expressed the view that there should be prompt military consultation Washington. He did not think Churchill's cable was related to the present situation.

French military view is that the whole thing is washed out unless we can intervene. (There was something here about "2,600 of them"—General Smith thought closer to 600–800—don't know what it was).[2]

Laniel and Bidault have said that if they could have some sort of token support on planes, that they would continue to fight.

The President said that the French want us to come in as junior partners and provide materials, etc., while they themselves retain the authority in that region. He cannot go along with them on that or any such notion. He pointed out that Eden is wrong in thinking that the 200,000 soldiers there should not be utilized. President believes Eden ought to talk to his own military people—said certainly you would rather fight where you have got those troops to fight with, rather than in some place like Burma or Thailand.

General Smith said that the Consultative Group work had been held up, but he would try to see that they came up with some recommendations.

President suggested General Smith send a cable to Radford saying it would be well on his return to stop over in Britain to consult with the British staff and to ask them baldly why they would prefer to fight after they have lost 200,000 French?

President asked General Smith to have someone work on a draft of a message for him when Dien Bien Phu falls.

General Smith said the first paratroop battalion was not up to full strength.

He also said there is some argument between Navarre and De Castries.

O'Daniel has worked out a plan for the relief of the garrison, very similar to the plan suggested by the President the other day (possibility of going in from two other directions). He is a little sensitive about passing the plan up to Navarre. He is giving it to Dejon(?) [*Dejean*] who is sending it to Navarre without divulging where it came from.

Bidault is in his bad mental condition partially because he realizes what the repercussions will be—it will be said that the US did not go in because the French politicians refused to allow them in as a member of a group.

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[2] Reference is presumably to French wounded at Dien Bien Phu.

751G.5/4–2454 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Paris

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 24, 1954—10:14 a. m.
NIACT

Tedul 7. Eyes only for Secretary from President. Following is message which President requested be sent to you this morning:

"Dear Foster: If you believe that the following message could have any beneficial effect whatsoever, please deliver it through the usual channels. If you feel it would do no good, please destroy it. Moreover, if you find some value in the intent and purpose of the message, but doubt the aptness of its terminology, I suggest that you revise and correct it as you see fit. My present feelings in the Dien Bien Phu affair are accurately described in the draft of the message that appears below. The message is intended for Prime Minister Laniel, and of course if it is to be used there is no time to waste. If the Prime Minister should lack some logical opportunity for making a public statement of the kind I suggest, he might wish merely to reply to my message and then make his reply public. If he should make any such suggestion, please approve it on the spot.[1]

> 'My dear friend: The entire free world has been inspired by the heroism and stamina displayed by the gallant garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Their devotion and the quality of their resistance have been so great that now, regardless of the outcome, that battle will stand as a symbol of the free world's determination to resist dictatorial aggression and to sustain its right of self-determination and its dedication to the dignity of the human being. I hope that you may find it wise and proper to make a public statement to this effect so that France and all the world may know that, regardless of the possibility of the physical over-running of this gallant outpost, France will continue the war for the independence of Indochina, and that the spirit of the French Army and of France remains true to the honor and glory of her heroic past. France has in the past suffered temporary defeats, but always she has triumphed in the end to continue as one of the world's leaders in all things that tend to bring greater richness to the lives of men. I hope also that the gallant garrison at Dien Bien Phu may know that no sacrifice of theirs has been in vain; that the free world will remain faithful to the causes for which they have so nobly fought. With expressions of my personal regard, Dwight D. Eisenhower.'

As ever,"

SMITH

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[1] Regarding subsequent developments with respect to the President's proposed message, see telegram Dulte 17 from Paris, Apr. 24, p. 1394.

751G.00/4–2454

Memorandum of Conversation, by Ambassador Donald R. Heath[1]

SECRET [PARIS,] April 24, 1954.

Participants: Bao Dai
The Secretary
Mr. Robertson
Ambassador Heath

Bao Dai received the Secretary, accompanied by Assistant Secretary Robertson and Ambassador Heath at 11 o'clock this morning. The Secretary expressed American sympathy with the plight of the Vietnamese people in the war and Bao Dai expressed Vietnamese appreciation of American morale and material support of his country at war.

The Secretary stated his understanding that Vietnam and France had practically reached agreement in their present negotiations. Bao Dai said that was true as regards the political clauses; the French had recognized Vietnamese independence and Vietnam had agreed to enter the French Union. Bao Dai had tried without success to persuade the French to sign the political accords before the opening of the Geneva Conference but the French Government insisted that, in view of Parliamentary opinion, it would be impossible formally to sign them until the agreement and signature had been obtained on the subsidiary (financial) conventions. Bao Dai said he had reluctantly agreed to this because he appreciated the difficult political situation in which the French Government found itself. Had he insisted he would have met with a flat refusal. It was regrettable that the French Government had taken this stand because it might take months to negotiate the subsidiary technical conventions.

The Secretary said that the present attitude of the French Government seemed to be for a prompt cease fire and asked Bao Dai what Vietnam would do if the French ceased their military effort in Indochina.

Bao Dai replied that as he had frequently stated to Ambassador Heath, the Vietnamese army and the Vietnamese people would carry on the fight, but they would require friends to give them the means to carry on the battle. To the Secretary's question, "What means would be required?", Bao Dai replied "armament".

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[1] Heath, Ambassador at Saigon, was at Paris for discussions prior to the Geneva Conference, which opened on Apr. 26. He was a member of the U.S. Delegation to the Conference.

A summary of this conversation was transmitted in telegram Secto 10 from Paris, Apr. 24. (751G.00/4–2454)

Bao Dai went on to say that while it was possible, although he could not believe it, that Dien-Bien-Phu would be the last battle which the French would fight, that the Vietnamese people had not yet fought their own Dien-Bien-Phu. He asserted that there was no question that the Vietnamese National Army was ready and determined to fight on to victory against Communism. He referred to a recent ceremony at Hanoi, where hundreds of Vietnamese officers had taken the oath, not merely of allegiance to him, but to carry on the fight to victory. He said that that ceremony had created a very favorable wave of public opinion in Vietnam.

The withdrawal of the French, if it indeed occurred, would make the problem of recruiting and build up of the national army easier to solve.

Up to now the Vietminh had had a propaganda advantage. They could assert that they were fighting for the independence of Vietnam and for throwing out the "aggressors" (the French). In the government controlled territories there was still some confusion in view of the presence of French troops, whether Bao Dai's forces were indeed fighting for Vietnam or for the French. With French withdrawal this would disappear.

While there had been a few difficulties, not important ones, in the south, in north Vietnam the overwhelming sentiment was to fight against Communism. Before coming to France he had consulted with political leaders of all parts of Vietnam. Their unanimous opinion was that Vietnam must carry on the fight to victory, subject to the condition, however, that they find "friends" among foreign countries to support them in that effort.

The Secretary raised the question of Vietnam's participation in the Geneva conference. Bao Dai said that of course Vietnam would accept an invitation to participate in the conference on the basis of the equality and recognition that she was a fully sovereign and independent state. However, if the conference decided to invite the Viet Minh, that would create "a delicate situation" since the Viet Minh were not a "state" but merely rebels.

He had asked the French to call a meeting of the High Council of the French Union before the Geneva Conference but had just received an evasive reply from the French that it would be difficult to convoke such a meeting at the present time.

Mr. Robertson urged that it was very necessary in Vietnam's own interest that she be represented at the conference.

751G.00/4–2654

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant)[1]

TOP SECRET [PARIS,] 26 April 1954.

Participants: The Secretary of State
Admiral Radford
Livingston T. Merchant
Mr. Eden
Sir Harold Caccia[2]
Mr. C. A. E. Shuckburgh

Place: Paris

Date: 24 April 1954.

Mr. Eden met with the Secretary of State by pre-arrangement at the Residence at about 3:45 this afternoon for about 35 minutes. The other participants listed above were present throughout.

The Secretary opened the conversation by saying that there appeared to be no chance of keeping the French fighting in Indochina unless they know that the British and the United States were going to be in there with them. He referred to the request made by the French for massive

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[1] Secretary Dulles described this meeting in telegram Dulte 18 from Paris, Apr. 24, which read as follows:

"Eyes only Acting Secretary. Admiral Radford and I saw Eden briefly this afternoon before tripartite meeting with Bidault.

"I laid before Eden essentiality of prompt combined action regarding Indochina if situation was to be saved. I emphasized that for us to act, British participation was necessary and I added that I hoped we could bring with us other countries I had visualized in *Ad Hoc* group.

"Admiral Radford, in reply to Eden's question whether form of intervention contemplated use of troops, said he had in mind use of RAF units now in Hong Kong or Malaya. He acknowledged even immediate air intervention by US and UK could not save Dien Bien Phu but emphasized that public entrance of US and UK would forestall general collapse and chaos in Vietnam which, if it occurred, he believed might result in massacre of French.

"Eden asked number of questions indicating no basic difference in our estimates of military importance of Indochina but reflecting political difficulty intervention would produce in England. He also expressed perplexity at fact French are telling him and me somewhat different stories. They have given him impression that they will fight on if Dien Bien Phu falls. We agreed we would seek from Bidault at the tripartite meeting later in the afternoon clarification on this point as well as the matter of continued French adherence to the joint US-French communiqué in Paris of April 14.

"There was considerable talk of difficulty of suppressing by military means alone guerillas and subversion throughout southeast Asia. Radford expressed his belief only effective cure was to place pressure on source of infection and activity, i.e., Communist China.

"Eden accepted seriousness and urgency of matter. He is considering flying back to London tonight to consult Churchill and their joint chiefs of staff, going to Geneva Sunday. I believe he is deeply impressed and certainly aware of our seriousness, but I am not hopeful of immediate and favorable Cabinet decision on principle of intervention in Indochina." (751G.00/4–2454)

For Eden's account of the meeting, see *Full Circle*, pp. 114–115.

[2] British Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

United States air intervention at Dien-Bien-Phu. He went on to say it was impossible constitutionally to do this under existing circumstances, and that in any event Admiral Radford doubted that it would be successful in the sense of preventing the fall of Dien-Bien-Phu.

The Secretary then read almost *in toto* the message we had received of Navarre's talk with our people (Saigon's 701 to Paris of April 24).[3] It thus appeared that Dien-Bien-Phu was likely to fall within three or four days. The Secretary concluded by saying that if the British would go along with us the President was then prepared to seek Congressional approval for intervention by the United States with its Armed Forces in Indochina, but that an essential element in securing such approval would be the fact that it was firmly based on joint action.

Mr. Eden asked exactly what it was we had in mind the British doing.

Admiral Radford replied that we had in mind some prompt military contribution in Indochina.

Mr. Eden asked if by this we meant troops—to which Admiral Radford answered that probably the best immediate contribution would be RAF squadrons from Malaya or Hong Kong where at the moment he understood the British now had a carrier, which fact Mr. Eden confirmed.

Mr. Eden then inquired whether we believe that such air intervention would really help. He also said that the French had been talking to them in terms different from those which they had apparently used in talking to us. He said that the French had told him that even though the situation at Dien-Bien-Phu was bad they intended to carry on.

Admiral Radford said that he was concerned over the situation which would develop in Vietnam if Dien-Bien-Phu falls. He had in mind the serious risk of growing defections on the part of Vietnamese troops and the development of riots which would lead to the possible massacre of French civilians as well as a most serious situation for isolated French military units throughout the country.

Mr. Eden then said that they were our Allies with all that this implied; that he would consider what he had been told urgently and that he was inclined to think that he should go back to London that evening to consult with the Prime Minister and the British Chiefs of Staff. He added, however, that he did not think that air intervention would alter the situation.

Admiral Radford rejoined that naturally this could not be guaranteed. He felt, however, that it would have a very great psychological effect on the Vietnamese and would prevent their collapsing and turning on the French. He felt the very announcement of our intention to intervene would stabilize the situation. Admiral Radford added that it would be necessary, in order to restore the general situation, to have General Navarre relieved and for the United States to have a considerable voice in the conduct of the war which, however, could be exercised from behind the scenes.

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[3] Sent also as telegram 2098 to Washington, p. 1378.

Mr. Eden then inquired what our estimate was of the effect on world opinion and particularly on the Chinese Communists of military intervention.

Admiral Radford answered that he had never thought that the Chinese Communists would intervene if we went into Indochina. In any event he felt their capability for intervention was very low. He said he doubted that there were any Chinese Communist troops now in Indochina and that it would be difficult to introduce them in large numbers. He said there might be some limited air action by the Chinese Communists over Indochina but that this could be dealt with.

Mr. Eden then inquired if we believed the Vietnamese would feel better if we arrived, and the Admiral replied "definitely".

The Secretary said that that morning Bao Dai had said that if the French quit he hoped that the United States would help and that there would be no animosity towards them. The Secretary then said that he had covered one phase of the problem that he wanted to discuss and that he would now turn to the alternatives that he and Eden had tentatively agreed on for prompt military talks in Washington designed to limit the loss of Indochina. He said that our military authorities say that if Indochina goes, the only effective deterrent measures open to us would be those directed at Communist China itself. He did not feel that local action alone would produce success but that our military were thinking in terms of a blockade of the China coast, the seizure of Hainan and other measures. It might be possible, he added, to hold at the Kra line.

Admiral Radford added that the type of attack by the Communists against the other countries of Southeast Asia would not be the type which were militarily defensible. We could expect, for example, the formation of a "free Thai" state under Communist control from the confederation of Thai tribes which would result in civil war in Siam. He said that we further could expect an intensification of the guerrilla action in Malaya. The Admiral concluded by saying that no military front would be possible, and hence, it would be necessary to go after the source by offensive action against China. Finally he said that there is a tremendous compulsion on the part of Asians to be on the winning side.

Mr. Eden observed that there was a Soviet–Chinese alliance.

Admiral Radford said that he did not think the Soviets would start a world war now. He believed that they would only go to war at a time of their own choosing and that they could not be provoked into a war. Obviously, however, he said this risk must be taken into account, but that the acceptance of risks is necessary in order to avoid being nibbled to death.

In Indochina, the Admiral said, the political aspects were confused with the military situation. A large part of the political deterioration locally arises from the loss of confidence in Vietnam in French military leadership in the field. He pointed out that the French forces are scattered all over the country and could be massacred if the native peoples rose against them. Dien-Bien-Phu, he said, has been built up by the French in public opinion as a major battle. Actually only 5% of the French Union Forces are engaged in that battle though it is true that a far higher percentage of their best forces are in the fortress.

Mr. Eden asked if we were to go in there with air power, might not the Vietnamese rise against us as well as the French.

Admiral Radford indicated that he did not think this was a serious risk. He said that he had been very close to this situation for three years; that the French leadership had been terrible and [*was?*] obvious to all; that the situation has been steadily sliding down hill for three years and Paris cannot escape its share of the responsibility. Mr. Eden then interjected that the situation was entirely different in Malaya and that in any event the British would fight for it.

The Admiral stated that what could be expected was no immediate overt move against Malaya but a step up in subversive operations.

At this point the Secretary noted that the Communists do not feel it necessary to do everything immediately. They have a sense of history and a confidence that time is on their side. Therefore they are willing to wait and let situations develop.

Admiral Radford observed that he had little confidence in Siam.

Mr. Eden then said that the Cabinet would want to think all this over and consult with their Chiefs. He asked if they were in Paris at the moment and Admiral Radford answered in the negative. Mr. Eden then said he wondered if he went home that afternoon and arrived in Geneva Sunday[4] it would "hot up" the situation.

Admiral Radford mentioned that he had discussed Indochina with Whiteley[5] but that he was anxious to talk to Harding, and Mr. Eden agreed that it would be useful for Admiral Radford to talk as soon as possible to the British Chiefs of Staff. Mr. Eden then went on to say that broadly speaking they accepted the point of view that Indochina was critical to Southeast Asia, but he didn't know what the military views of the British Chiefs would be on intervention. Politically, he said, intervention would be "hell at home" and that he could not imagine a worse issue with the British public.

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[4] Apr. 25.

[5] Gen. Sir John Whiteley, Chairman of the British Joint Services Mission, Washington, and British Representative on the Standing Group of the Military Committee of NATO.

Sir Harold Caccia at this point reverted to the difficulty created by the difference in presentation of the problem to the British and to us. He said that Mr. Eden had sent Ambassador Jebb[6] down to the Quai D'Orsay and that Jebb had been told that, of course, the French would go on fighting if Dien-Bien-Phu fell. (Later in the day it was ascertained that Jebb had actually seen and talked to Bidault on that call.)

The Secretary said that the line taken by the French certainly was different. He said that Bidault had told him that if Dien-Bien-Phu fell and the United States was not in, all was over; that if the United States was in prior to the fall of Dien-Bien-Phu, then the French would go on fighting even if Dien-Bien-Phu fell; and finally when he asked Bidault if the French would fight on after the fall of Dien-Bien-Phu before our actual intervention, but after the receipt by the French of assurances from us that we would come in within a matter of a few weeks, Bidault had replied "No".

At this point the Secretary mentioned the letter which he proposed to send Bidault on this general subject but on which he was awaiting comments from Washington.[7] Mr. Eden read the letter and commented that it was very good. The Secretary said that he also had in mind the importance of establishing the record clearly since the French might attempt to pin on us responsibility for their withdrawal from Indochina.

Mr. Eden replied that any such idea on the part of the French was nonsense and that they couldn't possibly maintain it. Mr. Eden then asked if he could have a copy of the letter after it was sent, and the Secretary agreed. (A copy was subsequently given Mr. Eden after delivery to Bidault.)

The Secretary again reminded Mr. Eden that our Congressional leaders had said that they would not grant any authority to intervene in Indochina except on the basis of united action.

At this point Mr. Eden said he was very inclined to return to London that evening, and there was some further discussion of Admiral Radford's arrangements to talk to the British Chiefs.

The Secretary then asked what Mr. Eden knew about the Prime Minister's suggested visit to Washington.

Mr. Eden replied that he had just talked on the telephone to the Prime Minister and he had said that a reply had just come in from the

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[6] Sir Gladwyn Jebb, British Ambassador in France.

[7] For the text of the letter sent by Secretary Dulles to Foreign Minister Bidault prior to the Secretary's departure for Geneva on the evening of Apr. 24, see telegram Dulte 1 from Geneva, Apr. 24, p. 1398.

President which seemed to be agreeable in principle to the suggested visit.

As the conversation broke up, the Secretary suggested that at the tripartite meeting with Bidault to which they were both then going they might ask Bidault if he still stood by the terms of the joint United States–French communiqué of April 14.[8] He said that he had gained the impression that the French had now abandoned the agreement contained therein.

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[8] For text, see footnote 3, p. 1336.

751G.00/4–2454 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 24, 1954—10 p. m.

Dulte 15. Repeated information Geneva 111. Eyes only for the Acting Secretary from the Secretary. Please pass following information to the President:[1]

"Eden, Bidault and I met this afternoon at 4:30 with only one adviser each present. I opened discussion by saying that it was of utmost importance to know views of French Government re Indochina. In particular, should Dien Bien Phu fall, what would be position of French Government?

"Bidault replied that he and Laniel would certainly wish to continue the fight. However, loss of Dien Bien Phu would be event of tremendous symbolic importance with most adverse psychological reaction. Furthermore it would be a real military setback since while the actual number of French effectives at Dien Bien Phu was a relatively small percentage of the French Expeditionary Forces, the units engaged there were the very best available in Indochina. The French had made a calculated risk in sending their best units and reserves from the Tonkin Delta to Dien Bien Phu. The result was that the defenses of the Delta were seriously weakened. If Dien Bien Phu fell and the Viet Minh could concentrate against the Delta, the situation in the Delta would be very difficult. Furthermore, loss of Dien Bien Phu would have a very bad effect on the morale of the French Union Forces. In answer to my questions, he said he would do his best; but in all honesty and frankness he could not guarantee what position the government would take if Dien Bien Phu falls.

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[1] In telegram Dulte 11 from Paris, Apr. 24, 1 p. m., Secretary Dulles had instructed Acting Secretary Smith to inform the President that "situation here is evolving so rapidly that any considered estimate is impossible at the moment." Dulles stated that he would be in a better position to make an assessment after learning the results of the French Cabinet meeting that morning and after his afternoon meeting with Bidault and Eden. (740.5/4–2454)

In Dulte 19 from Paris, Apr. 24, 11 p. m., Dulles informed Smith that during the afternoon meeting, Bidault had passed him a message indicating that the French Cabinet that day had ordered the garrison of Dien Bien Phu to hold out until its ammunition was exhausted, which probably meant that Apr. 26 would be the decisive day. (751G.00/4–2454)

"Bidault said that he had expected to have a very bad time at the Cabinet meeting this morning, but contrary to his expectations it went off relatively well and he at least goes to Geneva with a relatively free hand without crippling instructions.

"I referred to the message from Navarre which he showed me yesterday (Dulte 7)[2] and said that Pleven had told me last night that the cease fire which Navarre envisaged in his letter covered all of Indochina and not just Dien Bien Phu. Bidault said that this interpretation was correct. He then said that morale of the Vietnamese was falling. He personally felt Dien Bien Phu had been a mistake. The French had held on to it for political reasons connected with the protection of the invasion routes to Laos and Cambodia, rather than for solid military reasons. It was always a mistake to base a military campaign on political considerations.

"I asked Bidault point blank whether there would be a cease fire before Geneva. Bidault replied emphatically that there would not be a cease fire before Geneva and said again that he goes there with his hands relatively free.

"Eden then said he wished to refer to the communiqué issued during my London visit last week.[3] The UK does not feel committed by communiqué to intervene in Indochina war. He wanted no misunderstanding on this. He said to Bidault that if the French request the UK to take some action with respect to Indochina, that that was quite a different matter, and he would be glad to refer the request back to London, or even take it back himself if this were necessary. He was not suggesting that the French make such a request, in fact he thought it would be a mistake but if they did, he would put it immediately to the British Government.

"Bidault said France is war weary after 7 years' effort in Indochina. US has been very helpful in providing money and matériel but if Dien Bien Phu falls the outlook is very somber. He would not say it was hopeless, but the effect of such a defeat on Parliamentary and public opinion would be very great and could lead to almost anything. Bidault made no specific reply to Eden's suggestions and put forth no specific request against the UK. He simply said that he was not proud and that anything that could be done to assist the Expeditionary Forces in Indochina or strengthen them would be appreciated.

"I then referred again to Navarre's message of yesterday which suggested that only alternative to a cease fire would be immediate and massive US air support. I said I had put down in the form of a draft letter to him the kind of a reply I would make. I had sent the draft to Washington but on a personal basis would like him to see it. Specifically I would like to know whether in his opinion such a letter from me would help him and strengthen his hand. It was of course still just a draft and subject to Washington's views, and if he had suggestions for modifications, I would also be glad to entertain them.[4]

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[2] Dated Apr. 23, p. 1374.

[3] For the pertinent portion of the communiqué, see telegram Secto 2 from London, Apr. 13, p. 1321.

[4] For the text of the letter sent by Secretary of State Dulles to Foreign Minister Bidault prior to the Secretary's departure for Geneva on the evening of Apr. 24, see telegram Dulte 1 from Geneva, Apr. 24, p. 1398.

"Bidault read the draft and said that his initial reaction was that there might be modifications in one or two of the paragraphs. He reflected further and finally said that if Washington approved the draft, he would not suggest any modification and it was quite all right to send it to him. Perhaps it would be useful at some stage.

"I then asked Bidault whether the joint communiqué we issued in Paris last week on united action [5] still stood. He replied that it certainly did and he also quite understood the fact that the UK was not bound to intervene in the Indochina war as a result of the London communiqué.

"Although Bidault was obviously tired, he appeared to have regained full control of himself. As a result of the above conversation, it would also seem that we will at least enter the Geneva conference without the French Government definitely committed to some disastrous course of action. I am under no illusions that this situation could not change over night when Dien Bien Phu falls. However, I feel that Bidault has stiffened considerably and unless his present mood undergoes change, I believe he may endeavor to limit the effects of the loss of Dien Bien Phu.

"Foster Dulles."

DULLES

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[5] For text of the communiqué, see footnote 3, p. 1336.

790.5/4-2454 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Geneva [1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 24, 1954—3:05 p. m.
PRIORITY

Tedul 2. Re Dulte 3 [2] requesting my reaction proposed secret military appraisal by military representatives US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, to determine how bolster Thailand against Communist aggression if French resistance should collapse Indochina. I comment as follows:

1. Secret military appraisal undertaken by military group excluding French seems impractical and would become known to French whose reaction probably adverse. Furthermore exclusion arrangement would probably diminish and perhaps extinguish any hopes French participation in defense Southeast Asia.

2. If French resistance should collapse Indochina it is safe assumption that thousands of French officials and civilians and Associated States subjects associated with French will flee for refuge Thailand.

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[1] Drafted by Everett F. Drumright, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, and Kenneth P. Landon, Officer in Charge, Thai and Malayan Affairs. The views set forth in this telegram were presented to Acting Secretary Smith by Drumright in a memorandum of Apr. 23, titled "Establishment of Military Commission To Appraise Military Situation in Southeast Asia." (790.5/4-2354)

[2] Dated Apr. 22, p. 1362.

Presence these refugees Thailand would be incentive continued French resistance. French participation in proposed military commission would facilitate handling.

3. Grave deterioration military situation Indochina coupled with growing French spirit defeatism and fact you have initiated program calling for "united action" point to necessity appraise military situation and examine possible course military action aimed to hold remainder Southeast Asia. I believe action should be initiated immediately.

In connection foregoing Staff Planners to military representatives five powers (US, UK, France, Australia, New Zealand) have had several meetings to exchange intelligence information regarding SEA and to formulate recommendations concerning military situation for presentation respective governments. This working level organization could afford starting point for constitution high level military commission including military representatives five powers Thailand. Such commission might meet Bangkok and should be given adequate responsibility formulate lines action capable protecting Thailand and remainder SEA from Communist aggression. To avoid further depressing French morale terms of reference of group should be based on assumption loss of Indochina not inevitable and should include explicit statement that planning will include measures for defense of Indochina.

I so recommend.

SMITH

751G.00/4–2454 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 24, 1954—11 p. m.

Dulte 17. Repeated information Geneva 114. Eyes only for the Acting Secretary from the Secretary. Re my meeting with Eden and Bidault already cabled,[1] suggest you also pass following information to President:

"At Laniel's request I called on him this evening accompanied by MacArthur and Dillon. Laniel who had Maurice Schumann with him said he wanted to describe to me the situation as he saw it. He said the latest news from Dien Bien Phu which he had received after the Cabinet meeting this morning was very bad. For the first time counter attacks by the garrison had been heavily repulsed and now it seemed only a question of days before the fall of Dien Bien Phu. He felt there was a precarious equilibrium at present both in Indochina and in France. The fall of Dien Bien Phu which had become such a symbol would be a heavy psychological blow both in Indochina and in France. He feared it would affect the morale of the Vietnamese army and if Vietnamese units began to desert it could upset the military equilibrium and lead rapidly to disaster. In France he was afraid that the loss of Dien Bien Phu would strengthen the hands of those who wished to end the war at all costs and he believes that his government which is the symbol in France of the continuation of the war will probably be overthrown. Laniel said it was for this reason that he had made the request for US military assistance.

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[1] See telegram Dulte 15 from Paris, Apr. 24, p. 1391.

"In answer I told him that we felt deeply moved by the gallant fight that was being waged at Dien Bien Phu and that we had shown our feelings by doing everything in our power to help in the battle short of direct acts of belligerency. I told Laniel that I was sure that he realized that under our Constitution the President did not have the authority to authorize acts of belligerency without the approval of the Congress except in the case of an attack on the US. Action in Indochina would definitely require Congressional approval. I told him that the US Government was prepared to seek this approval if desired by the French Government on two conditions. First, that the United Kingdom which had real interests in the area would agree to join us in the military defense of Indochina and secondly, that the Indochina States had achieved real and complete independence. I further said that from what I had heard since I had been in Paris the second condition regarding the independence of the Associated States seemed to have been substantially met and should present no difficulty. I told him that I could not foretell the attitude of the UK but that we were prepared to do everything in our power to make them see the seriousness of the situation and the necessity of joining in the defense of Indochina. I further told him that I fully realized the heavy load on French and Vietnamese morale that would be caused by the fall of Dien Bien Phu and said that I had hoped that this could be countered by the formation of an alliance that would bring to France's aid within the next few weeks the military forces of the US and the UK. For this to come to pass however, it would be necessary for France to hold firm in the coming weeks. I then told him that as a friend of France I would like to make one rather delicate comment. There were many people in the world who felt that the tremendous loss suffered by France in the first world war had been a mortal blow from which France had not recovered and that France has shown by her tragic experience in the second world war that she could no longer be counted among the great powers. The French reaction to the fall of Dien Bien Phu would have a tremendous influence on world opinion. I hoped that by standing firm France would show that she still had the spirit of a great power.

"Maurice Schumann then said that he understood from Bidault that Eden might not go directly to Geneva but would return to London to discuss the situation with the British Government. I told him that that was not quite my understanding. I felt that Eden was undetermined in his own mind but that if he received a request such as we had received from Laniel or from Bidault I believed he would then return to London to take it up with his government. If the French desired help from US and UK I felt it was important that he get this message to Eden. Laniel said that he would do so immediately and he asked Schumann to make the necessary arrangements. The way the conversation developed I did not feel that it was appropriate to leave the President's letter with Laniel. It is my recommendation that this letter be redrafted and sent instead by the President to President Coty immediately following the fall of Dien Bien Phu. Will cable suggested redraft.[2]

"Laniel now recognizes that the fall of Dien Bien Phu is inevitable. It has deeply affected him. For example, he mentioned that one of his messengers keeps asking him if there is nothing that can be done to save the garrison from massacre. He said that the Cabinet meeting this morning, referred to in my previous message [3] had gone well, but implied that had the bad news which he had subsequently received been known by Cabinet it would have had a definite effect on Cabinet meeting. I think he now believes that his government will probably fall and while I think he would like to believe there is a possibility of continuing the struggle he sees no way to do so. He also seemed to feel a sense of almost personal responsibility for the tragic plight of the Dien Bien Phu garrison. He made no response one way or another to my statement that we would pursue joint defense project if France desired."

DULLES

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[2] For the text of the message which President Eisenhower proposed sending to Premier Laniel, see telegram Tedul 7 to Paris, Apr. 24, p. 1383.

Secretary Dulles transmitted the suggested redraft in telegram Dulte 2 from Geneva on the evening of Apr. 25. (751.11/4–2554) The text, designed for delivery in the event of the fall of Dien Bien Phu, was virtually identical with that sent by President Eisenhower to President Coty on May 7. Telegram Tedul 9 to Geneva, Apr. 26, read as follows: "The President has approved and accepted your redraft of message to Coty to be sent immediately following fall of Dien Bien Phu, both as to context and timing. In talking with him, however, I got the impression that he was disappointed that the previous message had not been sent and rather feels that an elegy over the fallen would have less effect than what he had previously suggested." (751G.00/4–2654)

In telegram Dulte 11 from Geneva, Apr. 27, Secretary Dulles instructed Acting Secretary Smith to explain, if he thought it wise, to President Eisenhower that the Secretary had withheld the President's proposed message to Premier Laniel because he felt that delivery might be construed by the French as excessive pressure by the United States upon France to continue fighting. For text of Dulte 11, see vol. XVI, p. 578.

For the message transmitted by President Eisenhower to French President Coty following the fall of Dien Bien Phu, May 7, see editorial note, p. 1501.

[3] Reference is to the message contained in telegram Dulte 15 from Paris, Apr. 24, p. 1391.

JCS files, CJCS files, 091 Indochina

Memorandum for the File by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford)

[PARIS,] 24 April 1954.

On arrival in Paris today, I was met at the airport by General Ely and we made an arrangement to meet at 1015 on Sunday morning.[1] At about 1830 today I received a request from General Ely to meet with him as soon as possible, preferably before Mr. Dulles left for Geneva. I was unable to meet him before 2040, and of course Mr. Dulles had departed for the airport at that time.

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[1] Apr. 25.

General Ely stated that he came to me as a representative of the French Government and as a consequence of a Cabinet Meeting today. I gathered that this was at the direction of Messrs. Pleven and Bidault, and that they had decided that Ely should come to me as a military man to talk to another military man on the situation as he saw it. He stated he came to ask for American intervention, well realizing that such intervention could have no direct bearing on the situation at Dien Bien Phu, but that the point which he wanted to stress was that in his opinion, and I gathered this was also the consensus of opinion of the Cabinet, American aid should be rendered before Dien Bien Phu fell for the psychological effect not only on opinion in France but also because of its effect on public opinion in Indo-China.

His personal and private opinion of the French Cabinet was that a few members were strong, and he named Messrs. Laniel, Bidault, Pleven, and at least by inference inferred that the balance of the Cabinet was weak. He said this was no time to criticize General Navarre for what he had done or not done. In answer to a question, he assured me that General Navarre had complete freedom of action in Indo-China and further stated that he, Ely, would back him up even if Navarre were to receive a court-martial later. In other words, he had to approve Navarre's action up to this time.

While not specific, I felt that General Ely was in effect telling me that the consequences of a refusal on the part of the U.S. to render aid at a critical time could have very severe implications in regard to relationships between France and the United States.

He discussed how long Dien Bien Phu could hold out. I mentioned my latest information when I left Washington indicated 3 to 5 days in terms of food and ammunition. He said that was probably a little better now, that they had been able to drop more supplies and ammunition within the last 24 hours. However, he could not be very optimistic as to the number of days Dien Bien Phu could hold out. I asked him if it would be possible for General Navarre to drop troops south of Dien Bien Phu and possibly in sufficient numbers to influence favorably the situation there, and he said he did not think it would be possible. He kept stressing that Operation Vulture must be carried out regardless of the outcome at Dien Bien Phu and prior to the capitulation or loss of that position. When I asked him what Operation Vulture was, he said that it was the name of the operation given to U.S. air intervention, and was surprised that I had not heard about it before. He went on further to say that this indicated a lack of close contact between the Americans and the military in Indo-China which distressed him and he thought he would have to do something about that.

751G.00/4–2454 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

TOP SECRET GENEVA, April 24, 1954—midnight.

NIACT

Dulte 1. Sent Paris 100; repeated information Department Dulte 1, London 64. Please pass following message to Mr. Eden Sunday morning.[1] It is text of a letter which I had delivered to Bidault just before I left Paris.[2] I have promised to give Eden a copy as soon as text was approved and delivered. Please tell Mr. Eden I do not plan to make this letter public.

Verbatim text.

My Dear Monsieur le President:[3]

Yesterday you showed me a message from General Navarre which suggested that the only alternative to his seeking a cease-fire in Indochina would be immediate and massive air support by the United States which General Navarre estimated could save Dien Bien Phu. This would involve active United States belligerency.

As I promised you, we have given this suggestion our most urgent consideration.

I must inform you that the situation as regards the United States belligerency in the area remains as I explained it to you last week when we conferred on April 14. War action under such circumstances as now prevail should be preceded by a Congressional authorization. Such Congressional authorization is in no event obtainable within a matter of hours, nor in my opinion is it obtainable at all except within the framework of a political understanding which would embrace the other nations directly and vitally interested in Southeast Asia.

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[1] On Saturday evening, Apr. 24, Foreign Secretary Eden flew from Paris to London to confer with Prime Minister Churchill and the Cabinet with respect to the question of intervention in Indochina. On the evening of Apr. 25, he flew from London to Geneva, stopping off briefly at Orly airport, Paris, to inform Foreign Minister Bidault of the British Government's decisions. For Eden's account of his discussions at London, Apr. 24–25, see *Full Circle*, pp. 116–119. In the absence of Eden from Paris, the text of the message from Dulles to Bidault contained in this telegram was passed by the U.S. Embassy to British officials to be relayed to Eden at Geneva on the evening of Apr. 25. (Telegram 122 from Paris to Geneva for Secretary Dulles, repeated to Washington and London, Apr. 25, 110.11 DU/4–2554) However, the message was actually delivered in London on the morning of the 25th. Telegram 38 from Ambassador Aldrich in London to the Secretary in Geneva transmitted at noon on the 25th (repeated to Washington and Paris) read as follows: "Message contained your telegram 64 April 24 (sent Paris 100 rptd Department Dulte 1) delivered this morning. Cabinet now meeting. Eden flies Geneva this afternoon." (751G.00/4–2554)

[2] Telegram Dulte 13 from Paris, Apr. 24, 2 p. m., contained the text of the letter which Secretary of State Dulles proposed to send to Foreign Minister Bidault. The telegram which was transmitted for Acting Secretary Smith, eyes only, asked that he present his comments on the draft as soon as possible. (751G.00/4–2454)

In telegram Tedul 8 to Paris, Apr. 24, drafted by Bonbright of EUR and Scott of S/S, the Department recommended that the last sentence of the third paragraph end with the words "Southeast Asia" and that the parenthetical phrase "and which would include a clear intention to grant independence to the Associated States of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia," which followed in the Dulte 13 draft, be deleted. It was also suggested that the final sentence of the Dulte 13 draft, which read "I suggest that you bring this letter to the attention of President Laniel," also be deleted. (751G.00/4–2454)

The above suggestions and certain drafting changes were incorporated into the final text, which appears here.

[3] Former Premier Bidault was currently Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Our views in this respect were expressed in the joint communiqué which you and I issued on April 14, and so far as the United Kingdom is concerned, in the communiqué which was issued by Mr. Eden and myself the day preceding in London.

My government adheres to the understandings therein expressed.

Apart from the constitutional aspect of the matter, I have taken military advice, and the information which I received is that even the massive air attack which you proposed could not at this juncture assure the lifting of the seige of Dien Bien Phu.

I should add that in the opinion of our military advisers, there is no reason why the fall of Dien Bien Phu, should it fall, should be regarded as materially and vitally altering the military position in Indochina. Already the gallant defense of the defenders of Dien Bien Phu has cost the attackers so much in casualties and exhaustion of equipment that whatever the outcome, the balance from a purely military standpoint would remain favorable to the French Union. It is our belief that on the assumption, which we believe to be reasonable, that a collective defense can quickly be organized along the lines of the communiqués referred to, the position in Indochina can be held by the collective action of the free nations having vital interests in the area. It is not apparent to us from any military reason why the fall of Dien Bien Phu should require a plea for a cease-fire which under present conditions would seriously impair the defensive possibilities of the area and gravely affect the morale of the governments of the Associated States and their adherents.

The issues of the hour are of the utmost gravity. So far as we are concerned, they evoke a determination to combine ever more closely and more vigorously with our trusted allies, among which we include France as the country with which, as stated in our communiqué of last week, we have cooperated in intimacy for nearly two centuries.

We believe that it is the nature of our nations to react vigorously to temporary setbacks and to surmount them. That can be done in relation to the present situation if our nations and people have the resolution and the will. We believe that you can count upon us, and we hope that we can count upon you.

Sincerely yours, Signed John Foster Dulles.

DULLES

751G.00/4-2454 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, April 24, 1954—midnight.

2102. Sent Paris priority 705, Geneva priority 5. DeJean asked me to see him this morning to read his latest estimate of situation which he is telegraphing Paris today. DeJean's telegram confirms loss of point 1 in "Huguette" and indicates that situation at Dien Bien Phu is desperate, although valor of garrison is such that possibly it can be held for few days or even week longer. DeJean's recommendation to his government is that only by outside intervention can battle be won. He bases this estimate on absence of effective French air power and reinforcements of land forces.

I told DeJean that most unfortunately last night General O'Daniel could not resist outlining his tactical plan for relief of Dien Bien Phu to General Navarre and had received, as was to be expected, polite, icy negative reply. (Cf. Embtel 2096 repeated Paris 699.)[1]

However, I felt that despite this fact, O'Daniel's plan had military merit, particularly since it was predicated on using forces which would not weaken Cogny's precarious strength in Tonkin Delta. I mentioned specifically withdrawal (possibly with US aid of transport according to O'Daniel's recommendation) of battalions now doing rear duty in lower Laos and Operation Atlante. When DeJean demurred that to remove Groupe Mobile from Pleiku might endanger Dalat with consequent unfavorable political repercussions, I said that to lose Dalat in order win Dien Bien Phu was good bargain.

DeJean said that he was seeing Navarre this afternoon and despite fact that O'Daniel had received turn-down, would urge Navarre to take closer look at his plan. He said very privately and "speaking not as Commissioner Generale of France but as friend", Navarre is emotionally deeply wrought up over Dien Bien Phu and thus is inclined to take on over-tragic view of picture there.

Indicating that he did not know his government's attitude on internationalization of war so far as specific details were concerned, DeJean speculated that it might be possible for French to accept responsibility for ground forces if Americans took over air and naval aspects of conflict here. He likewise said, speaking privately, that he did not exclude possible use of South Korean divisions in this theatre although his government was firmly opposed to use of either Nationalist Chinese or Japanese troops. DeJean thought, when I asked what Chinese reaction would be, that government in Peking would think twice before engaging in general war with United States in view of complete vulnerability of all Chinese centers of population to American air attack.

I told DeJean that I had no indication of what Washington thought of recent French suggestions re internationalization of war. However, I wished to point out that we had Constitutional problems in connection with declaration of war, to say nothing of very proper respect our government paid to public opinion. I thought in this latter connection that somehow to put UN aegis on any contemplated action might be helpful, although no one could expect Russians would miss second opportunity to sabotage UN action which they had missed in case of Korea.

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[1] For telegram 2096 from Saigon, Apr. 23, see p. 1377. General O'Daniel reported to Admiral Radford regarding his conversation with General Navarre in telegram MG 1163A from Saigon, Apr. 24. (751G.00/4–2454)

McClintock

751G.00/4–2554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET

Paris, April 25, 1954—9 a. m.
[Received 6:03 a. m.]

4058. Sent Geneva niact 121, repeated information Department 4058, London 967. For Secretary. Following message from M. Bidault dated April 24 delivered Embassy by hand:

Verbatim Translation Text:

"Dear Monsieur le Secretary of State,

"I have just received the letter that you have addressed to me after our conversations of this afternoon.

"I confine myself at present only to the observations that the conditions that you present on the military consequences of the intervention that we have asked of the Government of the United States.

"The opinion of our military experts, confirmed today even by a general officer who has established himself at Dien-Bien-Phu, and knows well the terrain, is that a massive intervention of American aviation would still be able to save the garrison. It is also the opinion of our command that the Viet Minh has effected for the attack of the fortress an exceptional concentration of forces and material engaging there the essential of his battle corps. This accumulation of means accomplished for the first time by the Viet Minh provides an occasion which will likely not be found again to destroy by air action a large part of the enemy forces. Finally taking place when the rainy season begins, this action could interrupt the supply of the Viet Minh under conditions which would put in danger the remainder of its forces.

"It is not excluded that a situation presently difficult be thus transformed into perhaps a decisive blow against the Viet Minh.

"Amicalement
(signed) Bidault".[1]

Dillon

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[1] In telegram 124 to Geneva, Apr. 25, repeated to Washington for information as telegram 4061, Ambassador Dillon reported the following: "A copy of M. Bidault's message, text of which contained reference telegram [4058], was shown British Ambassador Sir Gladwyn Jebb this afternoon. Latter has informed Foreign Office London contents message by telegram and will provide copy to Mr. Eden, on his arrival Paris this afternoon en route Geneva together with copy Secretary's letter." (751G.00/4–2554) For text of the letter from Secretary Dulles to Foreign Minister Bidault, see telegram Dulte 1 from Geneva, Apr. 24, p. 1398.

Telegram Dulte 8 from Secretary Dulles at Geneva, Apr. 26, repeated for information to Paris and London, read as follows: "I see no purpose in making written reply to Bidault's letter to me of April 24 (Re Paris' 121, April 25 to Geneva, repeated information Department 4058, London 967) and consequently do not intend to continue this exchange." (751G.00/4–2654)

751G.00/4–2554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, April 25, 1954—1 p. m.
[Received 10:51 . m.]

4060. Repeated information niact Geneva 123. For Secretary. For Acting Secretary. Pass to Secretary of Defense Wilson and Joint Chiefs of Staff. Following is personal message from Admiral Radford:

"I was met upon my arrival Paris [1] by General Ely who requested a meeting with me Sunday morning. At about 1830 Saturday evening Ely called and requested an immediate meeting preferably before Secretary Dulles departed Paris for Geneva. Ely came to see me at my hotel about 2030 Saturday.

General Ely stated that he came as a representative of the French Government following the Cabinet meeting Saturday afternoon and at the specific request of Bidault and Pleven. He had been asked to talk more as 'a soldier to a sailor'. He specifically requested urgent air intervention by US Forces at Dien Bien Phu. This request was made with the full realization that such intervention might not be decisive in relation to the outcome of Dien Bien Phu itself which could probably only hold out for a few days anyway. Nevertheless US intervention before the fall of Dien Bien Phu was of utmost importance both from the standpoint of public opinion in France and morale in Indochina. He indicated that US intervention was required to prevent his Vietnamese forces from disintegration as a result of the loss of Dien Bien Phu. Ely added his personal view that the French Cabinet included a few strong men, Laniel, Bidault and Pleven, but that the remainder were quite weak. He anticipates a very serious situation if the US had not responded to the request for assistance prior to the loss of Dien Bien Phu.

I made no commitment to Ely and explained that the US position had been made quite clear by Secretary Dulles to Bidault and Laniel.

Following the conversation between Secretary Dulles and Eden I am endeavoring to meet the British Chiefs of Staff in London Monday afternoon en route to Washington. I expect to arrive back in Washington Tuesday morning."

Following is comment by Dillon which has been shown to Radford.

In view developments last three weeks I am convinced that leaders of French Government have never informed full Cabinet of requests for US armed intervention. The Cabinet meeting referred to by Radford was actually a restricted meeting attended only by Laniel, Pleven, Maurice Schumann (for Bidault who was busy with Secretary and Eden), Armed Service Secretaries and General Ely. This group has been and remains willing to take entire responsibility for request for US armed aid on the basis that everything possible must be done to save or assist the garrison at Dien Bien Phu. If such aid is given it is my opinion, fully supported by Bidault, that French Forces will continue to fight in Indochina regardless of result of Dien Bien Phu. If such US armed aid is not given, the fact of US refusal or inability to help will inevitably become public knowledge. I feel that reaction in France where knowledge of US constitutional processes is almost nil will be that US desires that French personnel should contrive to bear the full burden of the fighting against the Communists.

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[1] Admiral Radford arrived in Paris on Saturday, Apr. 24, 1954.

I feel the inevitable result will be the prompt overthrow of the Laniel government which has done its best to carry on in Indochina and its replacement by a government pledged to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh and to withdraw French Forces from Indochina. I do not think that such a government would accept US armed aid in Indochina even if it were freely offered.

In short we must in making our decision realize that military intervention by US Forces in next few days prior to fall of Dien Bien Phu appears to be the only way to keep the French Union Forces fighting in Indochina and so to save Indochina from Communist control.

DILLON

751G.5/4-2554 : Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Geneva[1]

TOP SECRET WASHINGTON, April 25, 1954—1:58 p. m.

Tedul 4. Bonnet delivered text of Bidault's reply to you[2] late last night and we had a long discussion. I pointed out what the United States already had done and the impossibility of direct United States intervention without congressional authority, all of which I said you had already explained in detail to Bidault. I said that this authority could only be obtained as the result of a declaration of intention by the several nations most imminently threatened in Asia, in concert with ourselves, and that we had hoped that such a declaration would have been forthcoming before this. There had been delay and misunderstanding and it would be desirable for Bidault to impress upon Eden the sense of urgency and the necessity for concerted action which his message so clearly indicates and which we have stressed for some time. The President has been informed of the above and feels, as before, that concerted action is the only acceptable formula.

Just before sending this I read your Dulte 17[3] and believe I took exactly same line with Bonnet. I went somewhat further by emphasizing that an inglorious end to the French position in Indochina would have inevitable effects on Morocco and Tunisia, and ultimately to the position of France among the free world powers, all of which gave us the gravest concern and was the reason for our willingness to respond to the extent of our ability to the requests we had received.

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[1] Sent to Geneva for the Secretary's eyes only; repeated to Paris for information (for the Ambassador's eyes only) as telegram 3836.

[2] See telegram 4058 from Paris, Apr. 25, p. 1401.

[3] For telegram Dulte 17 from Paris, Apr. 24, see p. 1394.

SMITH

751G.5/4–2554 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State

TOP SECRET NIACT GENEVA, April 25, 1954—8 p. m.
[Received 3:56 p. m.]

Dulte 3. Repeated information Paris 110. Eyes only for Acting Secretary from Secretary. Referring Paris 4060,[1] it is my opinion that armed intervention by executive action is not warranted. The security of the US is not directly threatened. Also, it is not clear that intervention as requested under present circumstances would best protect our long-range interests.

It is not certain, and probably unlikely, that intervention would in fact save Dien Bien Phu. If Dien Bien Phu falls, it is not certain that the French Government will continue the fight even if US had intervened. It is quite possible that another government might be installed which would in fact repudiate US participation and leave US in most ambiguous position, embarrassing our prestige in western Pacific.

Immediate intervention without UK concurrence would gravely strain relations with both UK and Australia and New Zealand, and would make much more difficult future cooperation both Asia and Europe.

There would be no time to arrange proper political understanding with France with reference to independence of Associated States and training of indigenous forces, and once our prestige was committed in battle, our negotiating position in these matters would be almost negligible. This is particularly the case since, as Dillon points out, the full Cabinet probably does not know of the present request, and we have no assurance that the Cabinet, much less the assembly, wants our participation. A wide spread reaction would almost surely be that we had acted to prevent France from making peace. We would almost surely be confronted by a demand to replace French ground forces with our own, and refusal to do so would confirm French view that we were merely trying to keep them stuck in the fight.

My judgment expressed in this telegram takes into full account the possibility, as pointed out by Dillon, that the fall of Dien Bien Phu before our intervention may create a situation where US intervention would not be then accepted by France. For the reasons stated above, I believe we should accept this risk rather than intervene under present circumstances.

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[1] Dated Apr. 25, p. 1402.

In view of critical nature of situation, I believe it would be desirable for you to have a further meeting with congressional leaders primarily to inform them. You could make point that fundamental elements of situation remain as I presented them three weeks ago, and that meanwhile deterioration militarily and politically in Vietnam as well as Paris has been rapid. If you have such a meeting, you could give them the substance of this cable if President concurs.

DULLES

396.1 GE/4–2554 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Department of State

SECRET GENEVA, April 25, 1954—7 p. m.
[Received 6:55 p. m.]

Secto 3. Repeated information Paris 109, Saigon 1, Phnom Penh 1. Your 3 repeated Paris 3835, Saigon 2974, Phnom Penh 63.[1] Please inform Cambodian Ambassador orally of Secretary's gratification at willingness of Cambodian Government to commit itself to united action in present circumstances. With reference to Cambodian conditions, Department should explain to Ambassador in informal manner that any "condition" of participation can only be passed on by entire group and not only by US. Specifically, Department is, of course, in agreement as to independent status of Cambodia and trusts forthcoming Franco-Cambodian negotiations will be successful. So far as military aid for Cambodia is concerned, Department believes objective at this time should be effective delivery and use of aid. As was indicated to Cambodian authorities by Ambassador Heath, question of logistic organization of Cambodian army is an important factor. Heath believes, however, that in coordination with French who are furnishing both arms and budget support to Cambodians, some arrangement might be worked out eventually. US has already contributed to making available large amount of military equipment to Cambodian armed forces. With regard to possible future military action, it would seem premature to make any commitment other than to state that arrangements envisaged for command, etc., would reflect collective agreement and not dictation by any one member of group. Please tell Cambodian Ambassador on behalf of Secretary that in present critical circumstances, every demonstration of Cambodian determination to repel invaders and to clear country of Communist aggressors would be most welcome indication Cambodian solidarity with united action concept.[3]

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[1] The reference telegram, Tedul 3 to Geneva, Apr. 24, not printed, informed Secretary Dulles that the Cambodian Ambassador (Nong Kimny) had indicated that Cambodia was prepared to subscribe to a common declaration regarding united action in Southeast Asia under the following conditions: 1) Cambodia would participate as an independent state on equal footing with others; 2) military aid for Cambodia would be given directly rather than through the French; 3) in the event of the internationalization of military action, coordination would be the responsibility of a joint staff of participating countries with a Commander in Chief chosen by them. (110.11 DU/4–2454) The Cambodian Government expressed substantially the same position in a confidential note transmitted to the U.S. Embassy at Phnom Penh on Apr. 30. The Embassy's translation of the principal portion of the note was sent to the Department in telegram 132 from Phnom Penh, May 3. (110.11 DU/5–354)

DULLES

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[3] Acting Assistant Secretary Drumright informed Ambassador Nong Kimny of the Secretary's views in a conversation of Apr. 26; the memorandum of that conversation, by Day of PSA, is in file 751H.00/4–2654.

751G.00/4–2554 : Telegram

The Ambassador in India (Allen) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL NEW DELHI, April 25, 1954—5 p. m.
[Received 7 p. m.]

1596. Repeated London 298 Geneva 7. I had hours talk with Prime Minister Nehru yesterday April 24 following his statement in House of People on Indo-China.[1] Although purpose my visit was to discuss US economic aid to India prior to my departure for Washington, and his for Ceylon, he had Indo-China chiefly in mind and went to considerable length to explain his statement which included declaration that fighting there is in origin and essence "a move of resistance to colonialism". He said his experience in fighting Communist Party in India had shown him conclusively that he could appeal to voters only by showing that CIP [*CPI*] was controlled from outside India and therefore unpatriotic. Whenever Communists were able to attach themselves to a nationalistic issue, as they had succeeded in doing in Indo-China, they carried public with them. Speaking of Indian electorate he said that whereas in Britain and perhaps United States, eighty percent of voters were definitely committed to one party, with twenty percent uncommitted and therefore decisive in swinging elections, in India and perhaps other South Asian countries, percentages were reversed. He had to keep eighty percent fluid sector constantly in mind, to convince it that he was dedicated to Nationalism and not tool of western colonialism as his Communist opponents alleged. Hence his statement on Indo-China would have carried no conviction in India and South Asia if he had not come out solidly on behalf of independence and had not recognized unequivocably that Viet Minh were on Nationalist side. He did not want Peking to dominate Indo-China any more than for Paris to do so. He believed Indochinese felt same way and that Ho Chi Minh had been forced reluctantly to lean on Chinese help just as Western Powers had been glad to have Commie help in fighting Hitler. He reviewed at some length Congress Party refusal to associate with Indian Communists during post war because CPI under orders from Moscow did not support immediate independence for India. He remarked with smile: "you were hand in glove with Commies when I despised them as traitors".

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[1] For the proposals made by Prime Minister Nehru in the course of an address before the Lower House of the Indian Parliament on Apr. 24, see Folliot, ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1954*, pp. 123–124.

I referred to press reports that French and Vietnamese were about to sign agreement in Paris guaranteeing full independence for Viet Nam and asked Nehru whether he thought this would enable Viet Nam to regain Nationalist support. He said he thought it might, but pointed out that part of revolutionary movement in South Asia was social and economic as well as political. For example, even though French might grant full independence to Viet Nam, Bao Dai's Government would not achieve great popular support unless it also convinced people it would achieve social and economic reform.

Krishna Menon, who drafted Nehru's statement on Indo-China, says first half was for domestic and South Asian consumption and that Western Powers need concern themselves only with second half. He has drawn attention of United Kingdom High Commissioner to fact that statement makes no attack on Secretary Dulles' concept of collective security in southeast Asia, nor does it claim that security of this area should be left to nations of area. In fact it recognizes that collective security is required to maintain peace. Only difference between Indian proposal and American, he says, is that under Nehru concept, China and Russia should join with US and UK in guaranteeing non-intervention. This would result, he believes, in more or less neutralizing Indo-China and create buffer zone to prevent any further Chinese expansion towards South Asia and India. Krishna Menon claims he able to guide Nehru statement in this channel only because of Indian membership in Commonwealth. He pointed this out to UK HICOM as dramatic proof of value of Commonwealth connection.

During talk with Pillai yesterday (April 24) latter told me Krishna Menon was quite pleased with himself over fact that he had drawn factual parts of statement on Indo-China "straight out of Judd report".[2] Final sentence, quoting Pope Pius plea for peace, was further evidence of Menon's "fine Italian hand".

I told Pillai obvious weakness of statement was that its recommendations, if accepted, would result in control of Indo-China by Ho Chi-

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[2] See footnote 1, p. 892.

Minh, whose attachment and obligation to Peking were too close to be broken. I pointed out that stopping of aggression in Korea, at cost of severe fighting and casualties, had nevertheless made Japan much safer from Commie expansion than it would be if Commies controlled Korean Peninsula. Similarly, hard fighting was necessary to give Commies bloody nose in Indo-China in order to protect South Asia and India. Pillai agreed but said Nehru hoped both sides had let sufficient blood in Indochina to make them ready for cease-fire. If psychological moment had arrived, as it had in Korea last year, proposal "just might provide the out both sides are looking for".

ALLEN

751G.00/4-2554 : Telegram

The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State

SECRET PRIORITY SAIGON, April 25, 1954—6 p. m.
[Received April 26—2:49 a. m.]

2110. Sent Paris priority 706, Geneva priority 7, repeated information London 42, Bangkok 153, Singapore 67, Tokyo 81, Manila 212, Taipei 27, Seoul 23. Our army attaché has been queried by his Department re immediate political and military consequences of fall of DBP. I suggested to army attaché that immediate political consequences would be:

1. An instant feeling of panic among French civilian population in Indochina.
2. A covert and later open feeling of pride on part of Vietnamese that Asiatics had triumphed over whites, coupled in Cambodia and Laos reaction that "DBP is none of our business". This might stimulate attempt by certain Vietnamese groups to come to terms with Viet Minh.
3. A secondary shock wave of mounting panic in Vietnam that achievement of complete independence should coincide with military disaster thus leaving Vietnamese, at time when French may be prone to withdraw, almost completely defenseless before victorious Viet Minh. Unless prompt action (not words) by free world is taken, Vietnamese might be increasingly impelled to make their own arrangements with Viet Minh.

As possible antidotes I would suggest:

(*a*) Immediate statement by the Three Western-Powers represented at Geneva reiterating determination already expressed by Secretary that Indochina will not be allowed to fall to Communists;
(*b*) If possible statement from free Asiatic nations aligning themselves with declaration suggested in Pact A;
(*c*) Indications by our information media that loss of DBP militarily means only loss of 15 Franco–Vietnamese battalions at cost to Viet Minh of between 15,000 and 17,000 casualties.

Fact that DBP saved Laos from invasion and prevented Viet Minh from mounting contemplated decisive onslaught in Tonkin delta.

(*d*) Foregoing amounts, however, only to words. People in Asia generally and in Indochina specifically will want to know what deeds are contemplated.

McClintock

Index for Parts 1 and 2
Appears at End of
Part 2.